



Project-No. 513416

EU – CONSENT

Wider Europe, Deeper Integration? Constructing Europe Network

Network of Excellence  
Priority 7 – Citizens and Governance in the Knowledge-based Society

***Peacekeeping in Transnistria: Cooperation or Competition?  
Deliverable D82***

Due date of deliverable: 31/12/06

Actual submission date: 22/12/06

Start date of project: 01/06/2005

Duration: 48 months

Organisation name of lead contractor for this deliverable:

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<b>Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006)</b>		
<b>Dissemination Level</b>		
<b>PU</b>	Public	X
<b>PP</b>	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
<b>RE</b>	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
<b>CO</b>	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

## Peacekeeping in Transnistria: Cooperation or Competition?

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The conflict between the separatist self-declared "state" of Transnistria<sup>1</sup> and the legally recognised state of Moldova remains unresolved. What is the state of affairs in the mediation process? Is the mediation process driven more by cooperation or competition?

The answer is quite simple. The conflict stands unresolved, and there is little opportunity for resolution because of enduring deep-rooted differences between the two parties to the conflict and differences between the

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<sup>1</sup> A heavily industrialised area lying between the Dnestr River (left bank) and Ukraine, Transnistria has its unofficial capital in Tiraspol. Transnistria seceded from Moldova in 1990 with open support from Russia. After a short war with Moldova in 1992, a ceasefire was signed.

mediators within the negotiating framework. In sum, there is very little cooperation to identify and much competition. That said, the question of why so little progress has been made towards a final settlement of this conflict must still be addressed. Part of the answer lies with the international community's understanding of the conflict. How have external observers and, indeed, the international community interpreted the Transnistrian conflict for much of the past fifteen years?

Two pieces of conventional wisdom have led thinking as well as much international policy towards this conflict. These must be examined critically.

A first piece of conventional wisdom concerns the oft-repeated view that this is a "frozen conflict". The conflict between the Moldovan central authorities and the Transnistrian separatists may appear to be at a standstill, in that little progress has been achieved in negotiations and the conflict remains fixed on a ceasefire line established in the first half of the 1990s. In reality, however, this image is misleading. Rather than explain, it obfuscates because the conflict is far from frozen.

On the contrary, events have developed and continue to develop dynamically. As a result, the situation on the ground today is very different from the context that gave rise to the conflict in the late 1980s. A new reality has emerged since the imposition of the ceasefire regime in 1992. The amalgam of territory, population and government in the separatist area of Transnistria has produced something that is greater than the sum of these parts – a weak but still determined belief in the separatist region's sovereignty, at least by the region's authorities and elites, if not also by its population. The separatist authorities in Tiraspol maintain that they exist empirically. And, however weak the left bank institutions are, they have the recognisable features of statehood.

A second piece of conventional wisdom about this conflict is that "peace has been held since the ceasefire". This line of thinking would lead one to believe that the mechanisms created in the early 1990s to deter conflict have kept the peace in Transnistria. These mechanisms include, most importantly, the Joint Control Commission and the Russian-led peacekeeping operation. In fact, however, the record is poor. In their composition and structure, these mechanisms have allowed a predominant voice for the separatist authorities. Of course, consent of all parties is vital for the success of any peacekeeping operation, and it is no different in this conflict. However, in this case, one party has been able to block further progress. As a result, the separatist authorities have been able to consolidate and strengthen their armed forces, resulting in the dangerous militarisation of the conflict zone. So, not only has the peace not always been held, but it is a precarious "peace" at that.

Settlement of this conflict is difficult, therefore, because it is legally *intra*-state but technically has an *inter*-state dimension, opposing the legally recognised state of Moldova with the unrecognised self-declared "state" of Transnistria. In these circumstances, the existing peacekeeping and negotiation formats have tended to sustain the *status quo* rather than challenge it.

In examining the mediation process in this conflict, this article will address three specific questions. First, why does the non-resolution of this conflict matter from the perspective of the European Union (EU)? In particular, what are the stakes raised by this conflict for the EU? Second, which forces have sustained the status quo of non-settlement in this conflict and how are these forces changing? Finally, the article will propose a few thoughts on how to move towards progress in the mediation process.

### **Strategic relevance for the EU**

Although the non-settlement of the conflict in Transnistria does not pose a strategic threat to the EU, it does have a relevance that is strategic for EU interests. The distinction may seem overly subtle, but it is real in this case. This relevance lies at several levels.

At an immediate level, the non-resolution of such a conflict in a state soon to be on EU borders raise challenges at the level of soft security to EU interests. Given its geographic position on the borders between the Balkans and the former Soviet Union and near the coast of the Black Sea, the separatist region of Transnistria is well placed to act both as a source and a transit point for the smuggling of illegal goods, including persons, towards Europe. In addition, Transnistria has become a heavily militarised self-proclaimed "state", whose existence and activities have contributed to the militarisation of the region around it. Certainly, it is the case that the separatist region has acted as source and transit point for arms smuggling.

The existence of the separatist region since 1992 has contributed to undermining the political and economic transition process undertaken by Moldova. At a fundamental level, the continuing presence of the breakaway region within Moldova's legal borders does nothing to eliminate questions about the viability of Moldova as a sovereign state. With further enlargement of the EU to Romania in 2007-08, such doubts about the essential make-up and future of Moldova matter for the EU.

Furthermore, the conflict is relevant to EU ambitions as a nascent strategic actor. Within the context of the changes occurring in Europe's security landscape over the last few years – the Organisation for Security

and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) having faced a crisis in 2005<sup>2</sup> and NATO assuming increasingly global responsibilities – the conflict in Transnistria can be seen as a test case of the EU's objective of extending security to its immediate neighbourhood. This objective was declared as being central for the EU common foreign and security policy by the EU member states in the European Security Strategy adopted in December 2003.<sup>3</sup> In this strategy, EU security policy is seen to start outside EU borders; the Union cannot close itself up behind an illusory protective wall, it must pro-actively build forward security. The increased interest by the EU in the conflict in Moldova flows naturally from this starting point.

The enduring non-settlement of the conflict in Moldova also impacts on EU-Russian relations. The EU-Russia Summit held in Moscow in May 2005 reached agreement on the "Road Map" for the "Common Space on External Security" to be built between the EU and Russia.<sup>4</sup> On one level, the Road Map revealed progress in allowing for cooperation between the two in the shared neighbourhood – or, as the document stated, "the regions adjacent to the EU and Russian borders". In practical terms, however, a genuine strategic partnership between Moscow and Brussels will have to be forged on such questions as the conflict in Transnistria. Russia and the EU have had little experience in cooperating on security questions, especially in areas where Russian interests are deeply rooted.

Finally, the non-settlement of the conflict in Moldova matters because of the wider changes that are occurring in the post-Soviet space. Since 2003, this region has entered a period of upheaval, announced initially by the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia and strengthened by the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine. In parallel with these dramatic developments, the Moldovan government has conducted a *volte-face* in its foreign policy orientation, pursuing now a full direction towards Moldova's integration into Europe. All of these changes remain nascent and fragile. Nonetheless, they announce a

<sup>2</sup> In 2005, Moscow's ongoing dispute with the OSCE came to a head following a wave of political upheaval across Russia's near abroad. Moscow threatened to withhold its contribution to the OSCE budget in an attempt to force the organisation to de-emphasise its core mission - democracy and human rights.

<sup>3</sup> "A Secure Europe in a Better World", Brussels, 12 December 2003 <[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g)>.

<sup>4</sup> The Road Maps for four "common spaces" were agreed by Russia and the EU at the Moscow Summit: common economic space; a common space of freedom, security and justice; a space of cooperation in the field of external security; a space of research and education, including cultural aspects : <[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/russia/intro/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/russia/intro/index.htm)>.

new period of change, even upheaval, across the post-Soviet region, a region that by the late 1990s had seemed for many external observers as being entrenched in stagnation, if not hopeless. Securing progress in settling the conflict in Moldova matters, therefore, for supporting a range of wider and positive dynamics that are emerging across the post-Soviet space.

### **Explaining the status quo**

Since the 1992 ceasefire agreement, several forces have helped to consolidate the status quo in the conflict with Transnistria. The interweaving of these factors has strengthened the separatist "state" and obstructed movement towards the settlement of the conflict.

First, most importantly, the self-declared "state" of Transnistria has shown no intention, since the military clashes that occurred in 1992, of negotiating towards a compromise with the central authorities in Chisinau that would alter the status quo which is in its favour. The current legal limbo in which the separatist region exists, without recognition, has not been easy, but local elites have developed countervailing strategies of survival. These strategies, in fact, have profited from the limbo status of the separatist region. As a result, over the course of the 1990s, the separatist authorities succeeded in building the features of a "state" and deeply consolidated their control over the region. The basic objective of the leaders in Tiraspol has been to negotiate their *exit* from the Moldovan state – in contrast to the Moldovan aim of crafting a compromise status for the region that would retain it *within* the Moldovan state. Tiraspol has never wavered from this fundamental objective, thus rendering serious talks very difficult. From this basic difference flow all subsequent factors sustaining the status quo, as discussed below.

A second force sustaining the status quo has been the weakness of Moldova itself. Since 1992, most Moldovan governments were willing to play in the game of negotiations with Transnistria, but with few real hopes of settlement. The weakness of Moldova's central government, and the complicity that existed throughout Moldovan elites, political and business, with making the best of the status quo, meant that the central authorities never fundamentally challenged the existence of the separatist region.

The peacekeeping arrangements were a third factor. The Russian-led peacekeeping operation, and the Joint Control Commission created to monitor its activities and developments in the Security Zone, played a crucially important role in stabilising and normalising relations between the central authorities and the separatist elites immediately after the 1992 ceasefire. Due credit must be given here to the Russian government and to the Russian armed forces. However, over the course of the 1990s, these

structures became part of the logic sustaining the status quo – that is, the non-settlement of the conflict and the strengthening of the separatist “state”. If deployed in a conflict area over the long term in the absence of a peace settlement, a peacekeeping operation can often have this unwanted role (see the longstanding operation in Cyprus). In the Moldovan case, it is possible to argue that the peacekeeping mechanisms, while appropriate in 1992, are no longer so in 2006, because they are failing to support the political talks, which would imply challenging in some fashion the consolidation of the Transnistrian separatist “state” and because they were not securing the demilitarisation of the Security Zone.

Fourth, the negotiating mechanisms, while bringing together all key external actors, have not been successful in prodding forward the talks or in applying leverage against recalcitrant parties, whose actions have been blocking them. Throughout the 1990s, talks between Moldova and its separatist region were held through various formats, almost always under the aegis of the OSCE. The so-called “five-sided format” came to include Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE with the two conflicting parties. Progress towards conflict settlement through this structure has been hampered by a lack of consensus between the mediators and also by unilateral attempts by several of its members to short-circuit the multilateral framework. The five-sided mechanism, while not directly sustaining the status quo, certainly has not been able to challenge it.

Russian policies towards the conflict have constituted another factor. Various Russian forces in Moscow and on the ground have at various times been engaged in sustaining the status quo. Engagement has had military, economic and political dimensions, ranging from private business investment in Transnistrian concerns to energy support to the separatist region, elements of political support for the “interests” of the left bank, and the provision of passports to the Russian-speaking population residing in the region. In all, after 1992, with two moments of exception (1997 under Yevgenny Primakov and 2003 under Dmitry Kozak), government in Moscow has shown little deep interest either in pushing for conflict settlement or in using the leverage it may have over the separatist authorities.

In addition, the role played by Ukraine should not be overlooked. Despite initial hopes for a positive impact of Ukraine in pushing forward the negotiations, in fact, deep ambiguity in Ukrainian policy towards Moldova and the separatist region was an important factor consolidating the status quo in the 1990s. In particular, the opacity of the Ukrainian border with Transnistria helped to consolidate the separatist region through the illegal and illicit smuggling of goods.

Finally, neither Moldova nor the conflict featured highly on the radar of

international and European attention throughout the 1990s. The United States was engaged on an on-and-off basis, while the EU had little political profile in Moldova. Given the ambiguity of major players, the OSCE played as important a role as it could – by keeping the parties talking and major external actors engaged. However, the international community perceived little real urgency to settle the conflict.

The intermingling of these factors had clear results by the early 2000s. Firstly, the negotiations, despite momentary appearances of progress, were stalled and even blocked. Secondly, the separatist "state" spent its time well into the 1990s in consolidating political and economic structures as well as its control mechanisms over the region. In many ways, therefore, the logic surrounding the conflict over the last fifteen years has run contrary to settlement.

The status quo carried costs for all of the parties, in terms of social-economic difficulties and political burdens. However, in the last decade, both Moldova and separatist Transnistria have developed internal structures and external sources of support that offset the pain of stalemate. The status quo hurts, but not enough and not everyone in the same way. The Transnistrian authorities have become inured to the difficulties of non-recognition and have adapted to gain the greatest benefits from it. The Transnistrian "state" and private authorities have profited extensively from the legal limbo in which Transnistria exists and are content to retain the freedom this has provided for all sorts of criminal and non-regulated activities. While Transnistrian leaders insist on retaining sovereign control over the left bank, it has become uncertain that they actually seek recognition or would welcome its constraints.

### **Challenging the status quo**

In the last few years, significant changes have occurred which, taken together, have announced a shift in the logic sustaining the conflict.

Most notably, since 2003, Moldovan foreign policy has undergone an about-face. After initially placing hopes in resolving the conflict quickly with Russian support, Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin declared that the government saw little use talking to the so-called "criminal authorities" in Tiraspol and argued that the peacekeeping operation had been ineffective. In July 2005, the president and Moldovan parliament passed an Organic Law, which laid forth the central authorities' objective in the talks with the separatist region as reintegrating the left bank fully into the Moldovan state. Such explicit clarity from Chisinau was new.

In addition, Moldovan foreign policy has more clarity than ever before in

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its pro-European orientation. The agreement on the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan with the European Union in December 2004, as well as on an Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO, signalled an increasingly determined European vocation by the current Moldovan leadership.<sup>5</sup> Doubts have remained as to the implementation of this vocation at the domestic level, but certainly a change has occurred in the tone and substance of the Moldovan external profile. In dealing with the separatist region, this has translated into a more intransigent line by the Moldovan government that has been less accepting of a continuation of the status quo.

A second change has occurred in EU policy towards Moldova and the conflict. Since December 2002, the EU has increased its involvement at the political level in and around the conflict, which has signalled increased attention and commitment to Moldova and to pushing for conflict settlement.

EU policy has been reflected at several levels. First, the EU has developed tougher positions in the negotiations, including the identification of Transnistria as the main obstacle for settlement. Also, the EU has imposed, in coordination with the United States, targeted travel bans against elements in the separatist leadership. In addition, the Union appointed a Special Representative (EUSR) to the conflict in February 2006, with a mandate to lead EU policy in the conflict, and agreement to join the five-sided format as an official observer, along with the United States.<sup>6</sup> This appointment followed shortly upon the deployment on 30 November 2005 of a Border Assistance Mission on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border to assist the Moldovan and Ukrainian border and customs services, and to ensure the transparency of transactions across this border. In parallel, the European Commission has worked with Moldova and Ukraine to adopt and apply a new customs regime for trade across their shared border.

Despite ambiguous wavering after the Orange Revolution, Kyiv has changed its approach towards both Moldova and the settlement process. In addition to a conflict settlement proposal put forward in 2005, the Ukrainian government agreed in December 2005 to institute a new customs regime on its border with Moldova, including the Transnistrian section, to ensure the transparency of all trade as well as the sovereignty of Moldovan customs regulations – an agreement that was implemented as of March 2006.

<sup>5</sup> See the Moldova-EU ENP Action Plan : <[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action\\_plans/moldova\\_enp\\_ap\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/moldova_enp_ap_final_en.pdf) > and the NATO IPAP <<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2006/05-may/e0519a.htm>>.

<sup>6</sup> For the full text of the EUSR mandate, see <[http://www.eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l\\_049/l\\_04920060221en00140016.pdf](http://www.eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_049/l_04920060221en00140016.pdf)>.

The new customs regime on the border, combined with Ukraine's agreement to the EU Border Assistance Mission, reflects a radical shift in Kyiv policy – towards supporting Moldovan sovereignty *de facto* and not only *de jure*, towards aligning with EU approaches towards the conflict, towards pursuing foreign policy lines that are independent of Russian preferences and towards a willingness to sustain the costs of difficult choices. Certainly, ensuring the legality and transparency of trade across the Ukrainian border is key to creating new conditions around the conflict because it will strengthen the Moldova government and induce the normalisation of economic transactions in and around Transnistria.

At the same time, however, Russia's approach towards the conflict has become more defensive. The so-called "Kozak Memorandum" put forward by Moscow in 2003 marked a turning point for Russian perceptions of the conflict. It is worth examining the document in some detail as it highlighted Moscow's aims for settling the conflict on advantageous terms. The proposal consisted of a "Memo On the Basic Principles of the States Structures of the Unified State". Under its terms, Moldova would become the Federal Republic of Moldova (FRM) within its 1990 borders. The FRM would be based on the following principles: it would be united and democratic, demilitarised and neutral, and contain two Federal Subjects (Transnistria, referred to as the PMR, and Moldova) with all their state organs and powers, and symbols. Moldovan would be the state language of the FRM, while Russian would also become an official language. Federal Subjects would be given the right to exit the FRM through a referendum on the territory of the Federal Subject, should the FRM change its status or suffer a loss of sovereignty. The FRM would have had three institutions: a Senate (with 26 members); a House of Representatives (with 71 members); a Federal President and a Constitutional Court (with 11 members). All legislation in the FRM would have to be "confirmed" by the Senate. In a transition period, the PMR would retain its military formations. Moreover, there would be no review of PMR laws enacted since 1992.

The proposal raised interesting ideas but had serious weaknesses. For a start, it would have provided for too many joint powers between the federal centre and the subjects, which were also too vaguely defined. The PMR was recognised as a state formation in the proposal and provided with over-representation in the federal centre, to such an extent that Moldova itself would have faced the danger of becoming "transnistrianised". Certainly, the PMR would have been in a position to block the movement of Moldova towards the EU. The proposal would also have allowed Russia to deploy a peacekeeping operation of 2000 troops to guarantee security during the implementation of the agreement.

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Moldova's last minute refusal to sign the proposal and the lack of support from other external mediators exacerbated Russian defensiveness. The left bank has continued to receive economic and energy support, including humanitarian assistance, from Russian sources. In addition, the Russian government has criticised the new customs regime on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, considering it a "blockade" of the Transnistrian region.

For Russia, the conflict in Moldova has raised important stakes for Russian foreign policy. Former Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov argued at the OSCE ministerial summit in Maastricht in December 2003:

The memorandum proposed through the mediation of Moscow was acceptable to the parties. In our own conviction, its signing would have made it possible to resolve the Transnistrian problem within the framework of one state. Regrettably, the signing did not take place as a result of pressure from certain states and organisations.<sup>7</sup>

For "organisations", read the European Union. In Ivanov's view, all parties "lost" as a result of "methods of pressure and attempts at interference".

Divergences now run deep. The Russian government has tended to read EU statements about the need for a multilateral approach to the conflict as an attempt to ensure a predominant European voice and weaken Russian influence. In contrast, Russia has shown a preference for bilateral relations with Moldova, and not trilateral (with the EU and/or the US) or multilateral. Moscow has also rejected the European argument that the Kozak proposal was too flawed to be acceptable. For Moscow, the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict has become a small part of a wider game of seeking to ensure that Russia's voice remains heard across European security matters and especially in the former Soviet Union.

Much more worrying, however, has been the hardening of the authoritarian nature of the regime in the separatist "state". Despite some hopes of a nuanced opposition emerging inside Transnistrian politics, especially in the run-up to the 2005 parliamentary elections, there has been no breach within the elites on the central questions of independence and relations with Russia. In the last year, the authoritarian regime has only strengthened, with a well-orchestrated information campaign against the so-called Moldovan-Ukrainian "blockade" and new laws tightening control over non-governmental organisations in the separatist region. Hoping to capitalise on the Serbia-Montenegro precedent, Tiraspol has scheduled a

<sup>7</sup> Ivanov's statement of 1 December 2003, is available from IPD, DNB, Moscow <[www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru)>.

referendum on independence and even joining the Russian Federation for 17 September 2006.

These changes have offered new opportunities for pursuing conflict settlement, but they have also entrenched old difficulties. In late 2006, the situation in and around the conflict settlement process is worrying. First, the talks have remained stalled, despite the inclusion of new observers and new attempts to stimulate negotiation on overall settlement principles. At least on the part of Transnistria, if not also on that of some external parties, there exists little will for serious negotiations on a compromise settlement. The Transnistrian authorities remain as intent as ever on their *de facto* independence, and have drawn solace from developments in Serbia-Montenegro and the talks on the status of Kosovo. In addition, the existing negotiation and peacekeeping arrangements have not prevented the militarisation of the security zone or even provocative acts. Nor has the new "5+2" format succeeded in unblocking talks or in creating new conditions for their conduct.

What is more, Moldovan-Russian relations have never been worse, as reflected in the exchange of hostile rhetoric between Moscow and Chisinau over the enduring Russian military presence and the Russian ban on Moldovan wine exports for sanitary reasons. At the same time, EU support to Moldova has not yet reached a level and scope to offset the impact of rapidly deteriorating relations with Russia. The still timid EU approach to Moldova is reflected in enduring restrictions on trade and the travel of persons.

Over the short term, it would seem that current tensions work in the favour of the separatist regime and the strengthening of its authoritarian control over the region. The so-called "blockade" is not one in fact as firms have continued business. Indeed, it has not prevented the registration of Transnistrian-based businesses in Chisinau, including recently the Rybnitsa Steel Mill. Instead it has been used by the separatists as a convenient justification for harsher measures strengthening their internal control.

### **What to do?**

Within the OSCE, the current focus of conflict settlement activities has fallen on three areas. First, the OSCE has sought to secure Transnistrian cooperation with an extensive confidence and security-building package, developed on the model of the Dayton agreement for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Second, the OSCE has pushed forward the idea of deploying an international monitoring mission to inspect the military-related factories and plants on the left bank. Third, the OSCE has been insistent on clarifying Moldovan access to the Dorotcaia village, which falls under Moldovan

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central jurisdiction but lies on the left bank of the Dnestr River. All three of these issues are important, but none are logic-changing over the short term in ways that would affect the Transnistrian drive for independence. In such difficult circumstances, what should the EU do?

There are few good moves for the EU, but the Union could give consideration to acting at four levels. First, the EU should seek to relaunch the negotiation process between the two parties and to place these talks on a new footing. This would require the EU to be blunt, stating that the current mechanisms have not worked well and must be rethought. On this line, the Union could consider calling for an international conference, organised under the aegis of the OSCE, that would have three objectives: to take stock of lessons of the last decade; to consider the potential role of new actors in a format of "7"; and to explore new approaches to demilitarising the conflict and maintaining peace.

A second level concerns placing additional pressure on the Transnistrian authorities to take the talks seriously. The EU should seek to induce the separatist "state" to compromise through the further strengthening of transparency on the border with Ukraine, seeking Transnistrian agreement to the implementation of the confidence- and security-building package, and applying additional coercive measures against the separatist leaders.

Third, the EU must concentrate on strengthening Moldova proper. In this, the Union should avoid the danger of holding EU-Moldovan relations hostage to obstruction in Tiraspol. The goal for the EU should be to alter the equation surrounding the conflict by bringing Moldova as close as possible to the EU. This is a far cry from offering accession to Moldova, something for which neither the Union nor Moldova is ready. More simply, high-level attention should be given by the EU (as well as the US) to Chisinau in order to lock the Moldovan government onto the European track.

Finally, as much as possible, every step that is taken by the EU should be considered in light of the need to forge a positive precedent for EU-Russian cooperation. Constant communication through the European Union's Special Representative with Moscow is vital. More substantially, the EU could push three questions onto the agenda with Russia: producing a new joint settlement proposal; designing a new joint crisis management operation; and withdrawing Russia's military presence from the left bank. Certainly, a genuine strategic partnership between Brussels and Moscow, as has been declared since 1999, can only be built on cooperation in conflicts in the shared neighbourhood. Cooperation on these three questions with Russia will not be easy but they are worth the effort and costs.

Even if the EU increases its engagement, difficult questions will still

remain, which complicate conflict settlement and Moldova's overall future. First, might greater international and European support to Moldova in the settlement process actually derail the talks by stimulating greater Transnistrian obstructionism? How can this danger be offset? Second, would the creation of a "federated Moldova" actually undermine Moldova's European integration by allowing the Transnistrian authorities too much say over political and economic developments in the state as a whole? How can a settlement be reached that preserves Moldova's "European vocation" while integrating the left bank? Finally, how can the Transnistrian authorities be convinced of the need to change the current security arrangements in a transitional period *before* a final political settlement? With unclear answers to these questions, the prospects for settlement are not rosy.