

Washington, DC Conference on the Frozen Conflict in Moldova

Special Edition
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Speakers:

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President, Project on
Transitional Democracies
(USA)

Ambassador Pamela H.
Smith, Georgetown
University (USA)

Vladimir Socor,
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Senior Fellow, Wall Street
Journal Europe Columnist
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Security Challenge on the New Euro-Atlantic Flank: Resolving the Russian-Moldovan Frozen Conflict in Transnistria

The National Press Club Newsmaker Program, Open Society Institute, The Project on Transitional Democracies sponsored a presentation of the Moldova Foundation on the frozen conflict in Transnistria, Moldova's enclave at its Eastern border with Ukraine. It is the first forum on Moldova organized by the foundation and it will be followed by a series of other forums in the next 12 months.

The speakers of the first panel – Bruce P. Jackson, the President of the Project on Transitional Democracies and former Ambassador to Moldova Pamela H. Smith from Georgetown University – provided the background of the Transnistrian conflict and its characterization, putting it in the geopolitical context of the region.

Speakers addressed challenges Moldova faces today: crime and corruption; weak civil society and political opposition; uneasy

relations with its neighbors, in particular with Romania.

The second panel, moderated by Jonas Rolett, Regional Director at the Open Society Institute, had as speaker Vladimir Socor, a long-time expert on the ex-URSS, currently, a senior fellow of the Jamestown Foundation, who provided a thorough analysis why current and former attempts to solve the conflict failed and why a new approach is necessary. Then, Oazu Nantoi, Igor Munteanu and Vlad Spanu, co-authors of the new Strategy and Action Plan for the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, presented its 3D concept: demilitarization, decriminalization, and democratization.

Participants, who represented the US Government, foreign embassies, American think-tank community and academia, challenged speakers

with questions regarding the future of the federalization plan for Moldova, US-Russia relations, US Government eventual involvement in the region.

Event Details

Tuesday
2:00 pm-4:30 pm
November 23, 2004

National Press Club 529 Fourteen Street, NW Washington, DC

Conference Documents:

The 3D Strategy & Action Plan for the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. Executive Summary

The Wall Street Journal Europe article: Democratize, Decriminalize, Demilitarize: A Strategy for Ending Post-Soviet Separatist Conflicts

The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor article: Demilitarization, Decriminalization, Democratization: A Moldovan Concept for Conflict Settlement





"Transnistria is a completely criminal enterprise". Bruce Jackson, Project on Transitional Democracies.



"'Kozak' memorandum – a solution proposed by Russia – would give Transnistria a veto power over Moldovan internal and foreign policies", says Ambassador Pamela Smith.

Panel I. Security Challenge in the Euro-Atlantic Neighborhood: Moldova as Case Study

1. Some background on the Transnistrian conflict and its characterization

The conflict is not ethnically or religiously based. It is based on the political survival instincts and profiteering motives of the Transnistrian leaders and their protectors. Transnistria is an illegal entity. No international law enforcement bodies monitor Transnistrian trade on the Ukrainian border. It

has become an entrepot for the smuggling of arms, persons, money, drugs and other goods whose profits enrich Smirnov and his friends in local criminal networks.

Russia continues to keep its troops in Transnistria, guarding Soviet-era munitions depots, despite the CFE treaty. Russia and Transnistria assign responsibility to

each other for the lack of progress on munitions.

Transnistria bears the share of the blame for the conflict – it has not shown willingness to resolve the issue, while the Moldovan government has made concrete steps towards finding a solution.

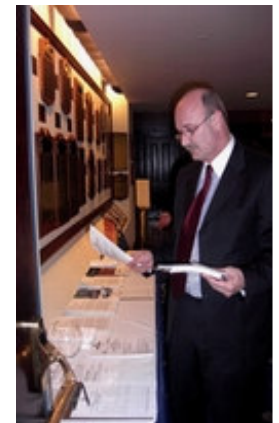
Conflict background



2. Moldova as a case study of European politics today

Moldova is in what is called the "third phase" of European history which includes the South Caucasus. This phase is fundamentally different from the "first phase" – these countries are still completing their national experiences and taking on the challenges of becoming European democracies.

Moldova and its neighbors are trying to learn the 20th century lesson of democratization in 3-4 years while the rest of Europe had 300 years.



Moldova as a case study



Jonas Rolett (OSI) introduces speakers of the second panel.



"The 3D strategy comes to replace ineffective 5-party talks on political settlement". Vladimir Socor, Jamestown Foundation, USA.

Panel II. A Strategy for Post-Soviet Counties Settlement: Democratization, Demilitarization, Decriminalization

3. Moldova must be dealt with as a post-conflict, not post-Communist society

Post-Communist societies such as Poland and the Czech Republic must be distinguished from post-conflict societies. Europe can't approach Moldova like it approached post-Communist societies because

- i) the geopolitics of post-Communist and post-conflict societies is very different, and
- ii) Europe has

changed since the last decade due its integration experiment – there is a new direction, public opinion and capacity in Europe.

4. Moldova doesn't have the basics that made the Visegrad countries successful

In the Visegrad countries, there was

- Much regional coherence and participation
- A robust civil society that hadn't existed pre-1989
- A sense of shared destiny, history, and purpose
- A common, unifying quality in terms of an external enemy. Moldova (and Ukraine) have a multi-vector situation
- A commitment to reform, allowing 'shock therapy' to move rapidly and making reform easier
- An economic situation preparing these countries for an economic takeoff (that situation doesn't exist for Moldova today – in some ways its economic advantages were better in 1989 than today).

Moldova's challenges



5. The challenges to Moldova's progress towards Europe

- o Crime and corruption. They are past the tipping point. Transnistria is a completely criminal enterprise, while there are indications that Moldova politics resembles the politics of a clan or family where the battle for spoils tends to dominate.
- o Its post-conflict nature. While there is no ethnic animosity such as in Balkans, there is clearly a fragmentation of identity, the idea of the nation has decayed, and the civil war has caused the alienation of Moldova in international politics. The recovery of territory rather than democracy and change are the national obsessions.
- o Weak political opposition. The opposition is not maturing at a rate of change comparable to e.g. Poland. The opposition is still 'negative' – it is factional, self-destructive and doesn't talk about constituent interests but personalities.
- o Lip service to NATO and EU. Unlike its neighbors, who in moving towards the EU broaden their group of allies, Moldova doesn't talk to its closest neighbor Romania at all for support. There is much EU and NATO rhetoric in Moldova – like in Serbia, Moldovan government victimizes Moldova, suggesting EU/NATO have failed Moldova, not the other way around.
- o Wrong policy towards Russia. This is due to fearfulness of Russia but also subservience.

75% of Moldovans are against federalization plan

Proposed Solutions

6. Proposed solutions

5-party talks on a political settlement have stalled, maybe permanently.

'Kozak' memo – a solution proposed by Russia which would have given Transnistria power in a confederated Moldova (similar to Serbia and Montenegro.) This solution did not include the removal of Russian troops. This would probably have been Smirnov's second preference, after his first preference, of maintaining the status quo. This proposal was refused, rightly, by Moldova's government and not supported by the US and OSCE.

Federalization plan - a solution offered by the OSCE in the summer of 2002 and that seemed like a viable solution that could be acceptable to all parties. It was characterized in some circles as another Russian plot, a sacrifice of Moldova, a permit for Russia to draw the Euro-Russian border at Moldova. The US is supportive of this plan but is not whetted to it. The US' stance is that any plan must guarantee that Moldova is an independent, stable democracy, with its territorial integrity intact. The solution must also be acceptable to the entire Moldovan population and be discussed openly.

3 D strategy – proposed by Moldovan civil society groups - democratization, demilitarization and decriminalization. Transnistria cannot be negotiated with while it is a criminal, undemocratic society, with a leader who does not represent all Transnistrians. and while Russian troops are still in Transnistria.



"The conflict is not ethnically or religiously based",

says Oazu Nantoi, Institute for Public Policy,

Moldova



"The 3D strategy might become an integral part of the New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for Black Sea Region for resolving frozen conflicts". Vlad Spanu. Moldova Foundation



Igor Munteanu, IDIS Viitorul, presents the 3D strategy: Democratization, Demilitarization and Decriminalization

Transnistria's other options?

Independence seems like a non-viable option to Smirnov and a union with Ukraine or Russia would be undesirable because Transnistria would be swallowed up and he would lose power. A true combination with Moldova would be the last option since he would likely be prosecuted.

Next steps



7. Next Steps

Moldova can't solve the conflict on its own. It has tried everything, without success, not due to its own fault.

- There must be a new balancing or shift of focus. Politics in Chisinau must be straightened out before moving on to Transnistria.
- Support to civic society in Moldova and Transnistria is extremely important.
- Moldova must commit to economic and democratic reforms if it is to maintain good relations with Europe and the US. For example, Moldova should embrace the EU Commission and make the action plan under

the Neighborhood Policy a surrogate for a pre-accession track.

- There must be pressure from all sides to unify the Moldovan opposition and produce parliamentary minorities that present alternatives to the government.
- Moldova must reconcile with Romania, and build a support network across the region.
- The US must continue to actively engage with Russia about the Transnistrian conflict. The US must use its relationship with Russia to pressure Putin to fulfill Russia's commitments to the CFE treaty and use his considerable influence on Smirnov to promote a workable solution to the conflict.

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