



## A Frozen Conflict Zone in Moldova: Why No Solution Found in Transnistria

(Moldova'da Donmuş Çatışma Bölgesi: Transdinyester'de Neden Bir Çözüm Bulunamadı)

Ömer AKPINAR<sup>1</sup>

### Makale Bilgileri

#### Article History

Alındı/Received:

14/11/2021

Kabul edildi/Accepted:

29/12/2021

#### Article Type:

Derleme

Review Article

#### DOI:

10.48174/buaad.42.3

### Abstract

Moldova gained the independence after collapse of the USSR. It declared the independence in 27 August 1991. From this date, Moldova have not integrated yet its territory where ratified by the United Nations. Transnistria is not under the Chisinau government as a de facto state. The Dniester River sperates two governments as if tow different states. The left bank of the river is Transnistria, on the other hand the right bank of the River is Moldova. In this article why the parties have not been able to find a solution for the conflict is examined. Four reasons are claimed for the conflict. First of all historical reality is an important reason for the conflict, also ethnic diversity can be counted as secondly. Especially Russian effect on the teritory is a reason for conflict as geopolitic and the last economic reason is the most important reason for the conflict, which is known as the tfrozen conflict zone.

#### Anahtar Kelimeler:

Moldova, Transnistria, ethnic, geopolitic, frozen conflict zone.

© 2021 BUAAD-BIJAR. Tüm hakları saklıdır.

### Kaynak gösterme / To cite this article:

Akpınar, Ö. (2021). A frozen conflict zone in Moldova: why no solution found in Transnistria. *Bayterek International Journal of Academic Research (BIJAR)*, 4(2), 179-193. doi: 10.48174/buaad.42.3

### Özet

Moldova SSCB'nin dağılmasından sonra bağımsızlığını kazanan on beş ülkeden biridir. Moldova denize sınır olmayan bir ülkedir. Ülke bağımsızlığını kazandığı 27 Ağustos 1991 yılından bugüne kadar toprak bütünlüğünü sağlayamadı. Toprak bütünlüğünü sağlayamadığı bölge Transdinyester'dir.

Transdinyester Dinyester nehri boyunca uzanır. Dinyester nehrinin Ukrayna tarafında kalan Transdinyester yaklaşık 4 kilometrekare yüzölçümüne ve 500.000 nüfusa sahiptir. Tarihi olarak Moldova'nın diğer bölgelerine göre farklı bir yol izlemiştir. Dinyester nehrinin batı yakasına (doğu kıyısı) göre gelişmiş bir bölgedir. Bugün Moldova'nın elektrik üretimini karşılayan bölge aynı zamanda Moldova için sanayi ve doğalgaz merkezidir.

Bağımsızlığın ilk yıllarında Moldova'nın başkenti Kişinev yönetiminin Romanya taraftarlığı ve Romanya ile birleşme politikalarına karşılık Transdinyester Gagavuzya'yla birlikte bağımsızlığını ilan etti. Gagavuzya 1994 yılında otonomi elde etmiştir ancak Transdinyester ile Kişinev güçleri arasında çatışmalar yaşanmasına rağmen bir anlaşma sağlanamamıştır.

Transdinyester ile Moldova güçleri arasında çıkan çatışmalarda bine yakın insan öldü ve yüz binden fazla insan göç etti. Sonunda Rusya'ya bağlı 14'üncü orduya ait birlikler müdahale etti. Ateşkes anlaşması imzalanmasına rağmen bir barış anlaşması henüz imzalanmamıştır. Bölge Rusya'ya ait askeri birlikler tarafından korunmaktadır. Rusya bölgede barış gücü olarak bulunduğunu iddia etmektedir.

<sup>1</sup>omerakpnr25@gmail.com, 0000-0001-5007-7880

Transdinyester probleminin ve çözümsüzlüğün sebebi olarak dört başlık belirlenmiştir. Bu çalışmada belirtilen Transdinyester sorununun donmuş çatışma bölgesi olarak tanımlanmasına sebep olan etmenler şunlardır: Tarihsel, etnik, jeopolitik ve ekonomik sebepler.

Tarihsel olarak Transdinyester Moldova'nın diğer bölgelerinden farklı bir süreç yaşamıştır. Besarabya'nın diğer bölgelerinden daha önce Rusların tarihine dahil olmuştur. Daha da önemlisi Büyük Romanya Krallığı süresince SSCB tarafında kalarak Romanya ile ortak tarihi deneyim yaşamamıştır. Bu sebeple ister Rumen ister farklı etnisiteye sahip olsun, Transdinyester'in tarihi Rusya tarihiyle birlikte şekillenmiştir. Bağımsızlık döneminde dahi Dinyester'in sağ yakasıyla birlikte siyasi ortaklık içinde olmamıştır. Bu sebeple tarihsel olarak Transdinyester Moldova tarihinden farklı bir deneyime sahiptir.

Etnik olarak Transdinyester belirli bir etnik yapının baskın olduğu coğrafya olarak tanımlanamaz. Sovyet sonrası yapılmış herhangi bir çalışma olmamasına rağmen SSCB döneminde Rus, Moldovan ve Ukraynalı nüfusun birbirine yakın olduğu bilinmektedir. Bugün de etnik yapıların nüfus oranlarının birbirine yakın olduğu düşünülmektedir. Diğer yandan Moldova'nın Transdinyester hariç nüfusunun yaklaşık %74'ünün etnik Moldovan veya Rumen oluşturmaktadır. Bu durum Moldova'nın resmi dilinin Rumence olması, kültürel akışın Romanya üzerinden sürmesini doğal bir sonuç olarak ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Halbuki Transdinyester'in tıpkı Otonom Gagavuzya gibi resmi dili Rusçadır ve kültürel akış Rusya üzerindedir. Bu durum etnik bir ayrışmayı ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Transdinyester sorununun çözümsüzlüğünde bir başka sebep jeopolitiktir. Jeopolitik geniş anlamda uluslararası ilişkilerde coğrafyanın güç etkisi olarak tanımlanabilir. Şüphesiz jeopolitik kazanç Transdinyester'de askeri varlığını sürdüren Rusya Federasyonu'na aittir. Rusya Dinyester nehrinin Karadeniz'e kavuştuğu Odesa havzasından Bukovina'ya kadar olan yaklaşık 400 kilometrelik hattı kontrol edebilmektedir. Transdinyester toprakları Dinyester nehri boyunca güney Moldova'dan Kuzey Moldova'ya; Soroco şehrine kadar uzanır. Soroco Ukrayna, Moldova ve Romanya'nın birleştiği yere yakın olan tarihi Bukovina bölgesindedir. Ayrıca Transdinyester sayesinde Rusya Ukrayna'nın doğu tarafında asker barındırmaktadır. Moldova ile Ukrayna arasında hem askeri hem de ekonomik tampon bölge inşa etmiştir. Bu tampon bölgenin ekonomik gücü de hesaba katılırsa Transdinyester jeostratejik değeri Rusya için çok yüksektir. Rusya'nın hem güvenlik hem de ekonomik desteği Moldova'da yaşayan Rumen veya Moldovan kökenli insanlar hariç diğer etnikler için çekim merkezi olmaktadır.

Son olarak Transdinyester sorununun çözümsüzlüğünde ekonomik sebepten bahsedilebilir. Moldova ekonomisi tarihi yükleri sırtında taşımaktadır. Tarihin her döneminde tarım merkezi olan ve verimli topraklarıyla major güçlerin çatışma alanı olan Moldova, özellikle iki savaş arası dönemde bugünkü kaderini yaşayacak yapının temelleri atılmıştır. Dinyester nehrinin sağ yakası Büyük Romanya Krallığı egemenliğinde kalmış ve bu süreçte sanayi yatırımı görmemiştir. Hatta Romanya Krallığı mevcut zenginlikleri Romanya'nın diğer bölgelerine taşımış ve Besarabya'nın gelişmesini engellemiştir. Diğer yandan Transdinyester SSCB yönetiminde Ukrayna Sovyeti'ne bağlı bir otonomi olmuş ve ağır sanayi yatırımı yapılmıştır. Bu sebele bugün dahi Transdinyester sanayi ve enerji bakımından gelişmiş, Besarabya yani Moldova büyük oranda tarıma dayalı ekonomik yapı olarak kalmıştır.

Bağımsızlığını aldığı günden bugüne kadar Moldova ekonomisinde Transdinyester'in ağırlığı devam etmektedir. 1991 yılı verilerine göre Transdinyester'in Moldova ekonomisindeki yerini gösteren tablo aşağıdaki gibidir.

Elektronik ürünler	100%
Güç dönüşüm araçları	100%
Gaz nakil araçları	100%
Pamuk ve tekstil	96.6%
Elektrik enerjisi	87.5%
Çimento	58.1%
Düşük güçte elektronik motorlar	55.8%
Yassı çelik	23.5%
Tarımsal ürünler	13.1%

Tablo ekonomik olarak Transdinyester'in gücünü ortaya koymaktadır. Diğer yandan Besarabya Moldovası %53 oranına tarıma dayalı bir ekonomidir. Bu durum nehrin iki yakası arasında birleşmeyi imkansız kılmaktadır. Her iki yakadaki siyasi ve ekonomik yapılar kendi elitlerini yaratmıştır. Bu elitler herhangi bir şekilde güçlerinden feragat etmek istememektedir.

Ayrıca halklar arasındaki ekonomik farklılaşma Transdinyester sorununda halk tarafından politik baskı oluşturulmasına engeldir. Haklar arasında Transdinyester sorununun çözümü için bir talep oluşmamasının altında Transdinyester lehine var olan ekonomik farklılık yatmaktadır. Transdinyester halkı Moldova ile birleşmenin ekonomik ve politik kazancını görememektedir.

Sonuç olarak Transdinyester donmuş çatışma bölgesi olarak uluslararası ilişkiler literatürüne girmiş bir bölgedir. Transdinyester'de aktif çatışma yaşamaması şüphesiz önemli bir durumdur. Ancak bölgenin Moldova ile birleşmesi henüz sağlanamamıştır ve yakın gelecekte de sağlanması mümkün gözükmemektedir. Transdinyester sorununun en temel

nedenleri tarihi, etnik, jeopolitik ve ekonomiktir. Bu sorunların çözümü için çok güçlü siyasi iradeler gerekmektedir. Ayrıca sorun sadece Transdinyester ve Moldova arasında değildir. Büyük güçlerin dahil olduğu çok karmaşık durum söz konusudur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Moldova, Transdinyester, etnik, jeopolitik, dondurulmuş çatışma bölgesi.

## **Introduction**

The Republic of Moldova, a small country landlocked between Romania to the west and the Ukraine to the east, is arguably the most complex of the fifteen countries born out of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Awakened Romanian consciousness of Moldovans in the 1990s frightened the ethnic minorities and led to the creation of two separatist states within the country. In one, Gagauzia, it was possible to reintegrate through devolution of power and the creation of autonomy, while the other, Transnistria, remains a frozen breakaway region and a de facto state which still supports by Russia (Patlis & Maclauchan, 2015: 55-56).

Transnistria's region is a stated on the left bank of the Dniester River. According to Kezban Acar (2007: 3) the Dniester River also sperates the country to two parts with regard to culture, history and traditions. There were three major powers in the region firstly. They were Ottoman, Poland and Russian empires. After Ottoman conquests and withdrawing Poland, the Dniester became the border between the Russian and Turkish empires. While the power of Ottoman Empire in the region and the international arena was declining and Tsarist Russia was getting stronger in the territory was known Bessarabia. Then Russias empire captured the region and until 1918 Tsarist Russia ruled Bessarabia and Transnistria. After the collapse of Russian epire the region was occupied by Greater Romania (Koszel, 2020: 111). Between two World Wars, Dniester was the border of two states were Great Romanian Kingdom and the USSR. During that period Bessarabia was in Romanian side, on the other hand, Transnistrian was in USSR side as a teritorial part of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. It was an autonomy and called Moldovian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) (King, 1994: 348). After 26 June 1940, on the grounds of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed between the USSR and Hitlerite Germany on 23 August 1939, USSR invated Bessarabia, then Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) was established. Hence Transnistria became a part of MSSR (Roper, 2002: 103).

After dissolution of USSR in 26 December 1991, Transnistria declared own independent state. Gagauz along with Transnistrians suggested a tripartite federal state with Moldovans. The suggestion was rejected by Moldovans (Gasca, 2012: 1). A series of conflicts, even blood and iron, the problem got tangling. Even today problem resumes as a frozen conflict zone. In this article, the root of Transnistrian conflict as a forezon conflict zone. No doubt a lot of times the sides tried to solve the problem but unfortunately they could not find a way. The most important one of them the Kozak

memorandum in 2003. Kozak (the name is coming from the politician of Russia Dmitry Kozak) memorandum could not be successful. It offered asymmetric federation for Moldova and Transnistria (Minzarari, 2010: 32). To study on the attempting to solution needs a new article. Because of that, in that article we did not explain and study on the solution attempting.

## 1. A Brief History Of The Recent Conflicts

In 11 March 1985 In USSR, Mikhail Sergiyevic Gorbachev became the president of USSR. In a short time he started two important policy in the country. One of them was *glasnost* (openness) and the other was *perestroika* (reconstruction). These two policies inspired to national movements. One of them was called the reform movement, other was the national movement. In Moldova, the two movements started to come in a body 1989 and they were called the Moldovan Popular Front. Three new language laws were approved by the Supreme Soviet of Moldova about using Latin script and Romanian Language as official language. All of the nationalist movements were creating opposition in Gagauzia and Transnistria (Vahl and Emerson, 2004: 5).

The Moldovan Supreme Soviet election held in 1990. According to Vahl and Emerson, the Popular Front won obtaining 40% of the mandates. As they mentioned:

"In that year the Popular Front supported the unification with Romania. They adopted the Romanian tricolour with a Moldovan coat of arms as the national flag, and the Romanian national anthem as the Moldovan national anthem in April. This was followed on 23 June by a declaration of state sovereignty, giving local legislation priority over all-union laws, renounced the Communist Party and enshrined multiparty democracy as the basis for political life in Moldova. "

Against to all the politics which were made by Chisinau politicians, Gagauzia and Transnistria rejected. The first violent clashes between Transnistrians and Moldovan police for control over municipal bodies had taken place in early November 1990 in Dubasari in central Transnistria. Paramilitary groups had been created on the left bank, and were the core of the Transnistrian 'Republican Guard' which was established in 1991. Cossack volunteers also joined the clashes. They became an important part of the conflict for the Transnistrian authorities. Last months of 1991 Transnistrian groups controlled over public institutions such as municipal and local administrative buildings, police stations, schools, newspapers and radio stations in towns and villages on the left bank. Chisinau did not interfere with a heavy hand firstly. On 13 December, however, the Moldovan police returned fire for the first time while defending the regional government building in Dubasari. New clashes took place in March 1992, followed by a declaration of a state of emergency on March 28. Fighting between Moldovan and Transnistrian forces intensified again in May and June. The principal and decisive battle took place in Bender (Tighina) on June 19-21, and ended as Russian forces intervened and Moldovan forces were driven out of the town (Roper, 2002: 105).

The 14th Soviet Army interfered the armed clashes. General Aleksandr Lebel who was working for Russia as the commander of the Russian troops supported to Igor Smirnov who was the leader of Transnistrian powers during the Bender battle. In spring 1992, fighting again started. The Foreign Ministers of Moldova, Ukraine, Romania and Russia met in Helsinki in charge of Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). But they could not reach an agreement. While the situation was getting worse, the Russian President Boris Yeltsin and the Moldovan President Mircea Snegur signed a cease-fire agreement on 21 July 1992 in Moscow. The number of casualties was about one thousand and ten thousands were wounded. About one hundred thousand people left the country. The status quo has still been living since 1992 (Vahl and Emerson: 8).

## **2. The Reasons Of The Conflict**

In this study, four reasons are listed for the insolvency of the conflict. No doubt the first reason is historical. Secondly ethnic and thirdly geopolitics can be serialized. The last but not the least, economic reason is the biggest factor for the conflict. Actually economic reason is the most important reason but we can also take it into account in the actors' interests. Because economic activities are creating money and the partition relations are taking place between the real actors which are being controlled real people. These actors are very important factors for conflict. They are using expectedly economic devices.

### **a. Historical Reason**

Transnistria conflict includes deeply historical reasons. The problem can be taken back to Tsar Era. Transnistria stays on the left bank of the Dniester River, with historical traditions significantly different than Moldova stays on the right bank of the river. The Ottoman conquests, followed by the secession of Poland, made the Dniester a river which is the border between the Russian (Tsar) Empire and Turkish (Ottoman) Empire. When Ottoman Empire lost the power in the international arena and the region, quite the contrary Tsar Russian Empire increased power in the international arena after the victory over Napoleon, Bessarabia (the right bank of the Dniester River) fell under Russian rule from 1812 (The Treaty of Bucharest) until 1918, to be ruled by Greater Romania after the collapse of Tsar Empire (Lubicz and Miszewski, 2012: 121–122).

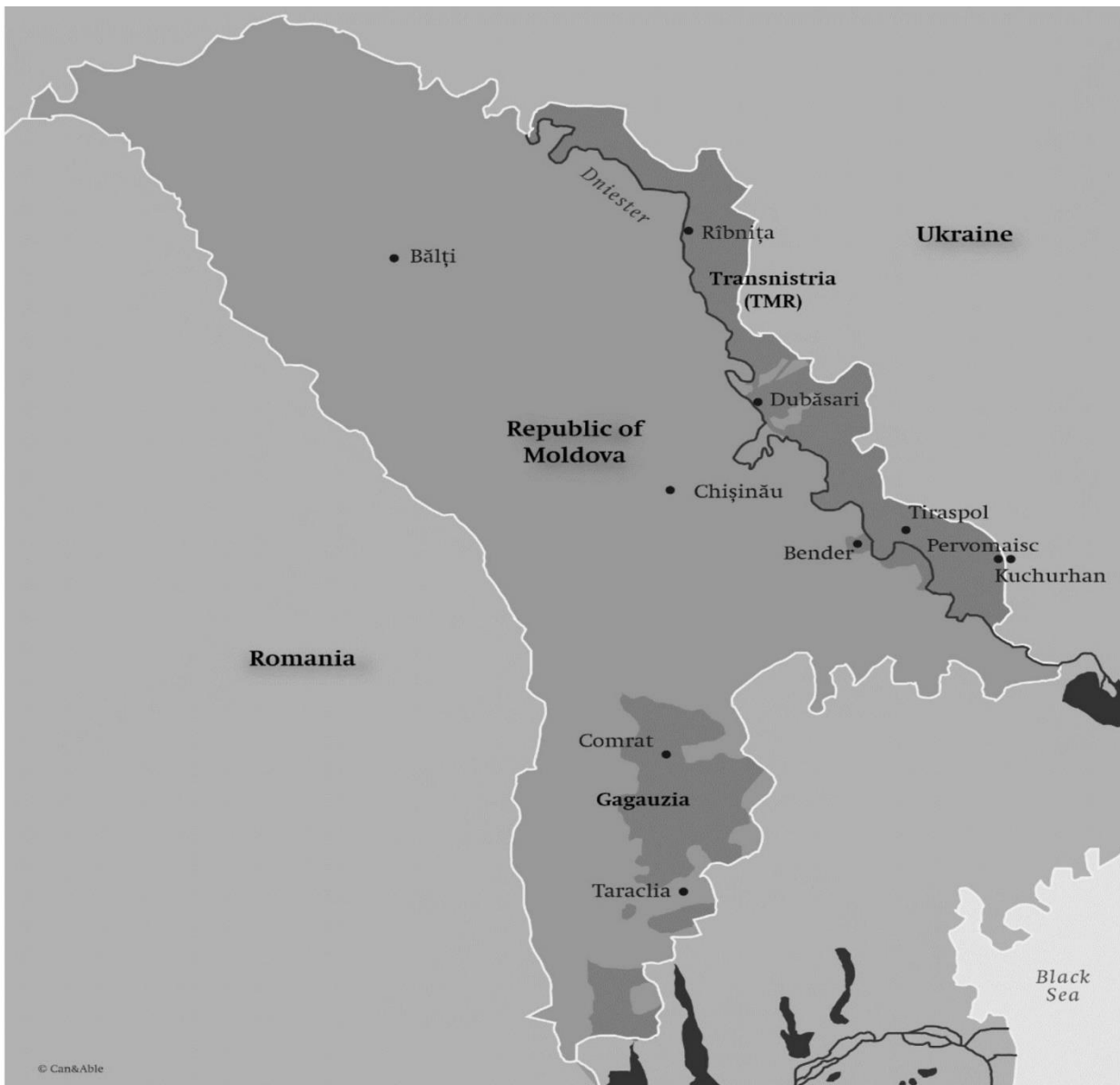
After the First World War, Bessarabia was annexed by Greater Romania found on the treaty between Germany and Romania. Thus Moldova came under the rule of Romania except Transnistria. The Dniester was considered the border between Soviet Union and the Great Romania (Rezun, 1992: 41-42).

As of 1922, The Soviet Union government directly looked for finding the legality of taking Bessarabia back. The Moscow Government never accepted Romanian annexation. In contrast with

Bessarabia, the Moldovan Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (MASSR) was established on the left bank of the Dniester. It is an integral part of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (USSR). Before the Second World War, Germany indicated that it was not interest in Bessarabia. Thus, Bessarabia became open to Soviet invasion (Koszel, 2020: 112).

USSR invaded the right bank of the Dniester where is known Bessarabia with refferance to the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact, signed on 23 August 1939 beetween the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany secretly. After annexion of Bessarabia by USSR the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) was formed on 2 August 1940 and MASSR was engaged to MSSR. During the Second World War the region changed hans but the end of the war political structure was turned to 1940 by USSR. After the war status quo was preserved and maintained until 1991. In that period of the time Transnistria was a part of the MSSR and it ruled by Chisinau (King, 2000: 55).

Map1: Transnistria and Moldova



Source: Klemens Büscher, The Transnistria Conflict in Light of the Crisis over Ukraine: 25.

We have to mention that during the MSSR, Bessarabia was an agricultural field in the USSR. The right bank of the Dniester was famous for vineyards, vegetables and fruit, while heavy industry was located mainly on the left bank of the Dniester. The area was highly urbanized and infrastructure was well-developed, containing approximately sixty five per cent of Moldovan heavy industry, eighty per cent of its energy potential and a strong armaments sector (Solak, 2014: 19).

The dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu was overthrown in December 1989. Then Romania and Moldova unification was began to be talked about. Romania is the homeland for nationalist Moldovans and they demanded constructing a federation. The integration policy into Romania provoked the other migrations who lived in Gagauzia and on the left bank of the Dniester. As politically and ethnically, there was no relation between Romania and Gagauzia-Transnistria. Popular Front of Moldova showed extreme nationalist behaviours and actions. The language was one of them. But Russian-speaking populations from Transnistria and Gagauzia supported a bilingual Moldova. The people who spoke Russian and were pro-Russian Moldova rejected and resisted to the Chisinau policies. Then they took arms and a conflict emerged. The conflict was controlled by the elites in Soviet Transnistria (Oleksy, 2013: 170). In December 1990, in Rybnitsa and Tiraspol conducted a referendum for building the Transnistrian Autonomous Socialist Republic. Over 90 per cent of votes accepted the secession. The leaders of Transnistria announced that to live with the Moldovans was impossible. Hence on November 5, 1990, the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) was established at last. Igor Smirnov was the first president of PMR. The Supreme Council of PMR unilaterally declared the sovereignty of Transnistria on December 8, 1991. This was preceded by Moldova declaring independence on August 27, as the last post-Soviet republic to do so (Koszel: 112).

The full-scale hostilities erupted in March 1992 between Tiraspol and Chisinau. The Moldovan Army tried to take control of the bridges on the Dniester but did not become successful in three different attempts. The Transnistrian groups or rebels were supported by the Russian 14th Army. Also Ukrainian and Russian reinforced to Transnistrian groups (Goltz, 1993: 93). The ceasefire was signed in July 1992 after Moldovan forces were withdrew from the Dniester River (Sprague, 2016: 16).

During the conflicts, about 1.000 people died and about 100.000 people left the country. Today PRM is called an unrecognised state (de jure) in United Nations (UN). Its official name is „Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR). The capital is Tiraspol. About 2.500 Russian soldiers are deployed in Transnistria (Vahl and Emerson, 2004: 8), . But the number is exaggerated. It should be about 500 soldiers. Because there is no symmetric power against Russian army in the region (Akpınar, 2021: 106).

## **b. Ethnic Reason**

During the history Moldova has been a multi ethnicity territory. Even today in Bessarabia there are eighteen ethnics live in terms of the National Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Moldova (NBSM) ([statistica.gov.md](http://statistica.gov.md)). Also according to NBSM, today there are seven major ethnicities are living in Moldova. No doubt the biggest ratio of the population is Moldovan or Romanian. Moldovan and Romanian distinction is very important. Because some Moldovans accept them as Romanian, on the other hand the others do not. Actually Romanian and Moldovan ethnicities are similar, but in a long period in the history, the identities are changed. There is not a certain data to explain that how many people feel as Romanian or Moldovan. Because of this, in this article, we used Moldovan who lives in Moldova as ethnic definition is Romanian or Moldovan.

In 2014, NBSM did an in-deeply survey in Moldova. According to the survey, 75.8% of the population is defined as Moldovan. 8.4% is Ukrainian, 5.9% is Russian, 4.4% is Gagauz, 2.2% is Roma and 1.9% is Bulgarian ([statistica.gov.md](http://statistica.gov.md)). About five hundred thousands people live in Transnistria and the population includes approximately 30% of Moldovans, 30% Russians and 30% Ukrainians; members of other nationalities (Bulgarians, Gagauzians and others) are 9%. Russian language dominates all areas of public life in Transnistria. It means all people live as Russians. It is estimated that two hundred thousand citizens have Russian identity card and the same number Moldovan, while one hundred thousand have Ukrainian; multiple citizenship is commonplace (Büscher: 29).

Statistics show us actually there is no deeply ethnic conflict between the right bank and left bank of the Dniester. But it is clear that Russian population in the left bank dominated the other ethnics. It is the real reason why Moldovan and Romanian are different. Because of being effected by history and the living together with Russian people for a long time, Moldovans think that they are different ethnics from Romanian. Even speaking similar language they claim that Romanian geography is different from Moldova and they have got different culture. No doubt they have got different history as well. All in all Moldovans are different from Romanian. Especially in Transnistria they regard themselves Moldovan or other identities against Romanian. Hence we can put forward to that there is an ethnic dissociation in Transnistria.

According to Fatma İlknur Akgül (2001: 54), there is a deeply relation between ethnic diversity and political engagement. If there are many minorities in a society, high participation in politics is observed. In other words, there is a parallel relation between political engagement and the ethnic diversity. No doubt the same idea can be mentioned for Transnistria. But with one difference, political elites –they are known as oligarch- relation are not defined by just ethnic. They are also in the same social class. They care about and give the attentions just power and their relations are designed by Russian.



### **c. Geopolitic Reason**

Geopolitics, in its broader definition, is the analysis of the geographic influences on power relationships in international relations. Etymologically consisting of the words “geo” meaning earth, land and “politics”; geopolitics is a discipline emerged out of political geography. Arguments about the relationship between the human and geography or in other words the political effects of geography have appeared in Western political thought since at least the ancient Greek era (Aksu, 2020: 3). In this sense, in that article, the importance of Transnistria geopolitic is explained in terms of the territorial importance of Transnistria.

We can explain the geopolitic importance of Transnistria for four countries of structure. One of them, no doubt the most important, is Russian Federation. Transnistria is an island in the Southeast Europe for Russia. When looking at the map above, it is clear that there is a safety area between Moldova and Ukraine where is controlled by Russia. Also interestingly Transnistria territory is stretching along the Dniester River. From Black Sea to Bucovina (Romania and Ukraine border) Russian troops can reach. Of course that power can support from Black Sea easily. If Russia had left Transnistria, it would also have left the historical borders and Russia would have been thrown into the pre-age the Treaty of Jassy in 1792 (Koçak, 2017: 479).

Secondly Russia hold the economic power. Between Moldova and Ukrainian trade is able to controlled by Russia. Also Transnistria has got energy industry that it is has been using by Moldova. Natural gas and electricity is coming from Transnistria. Moldova, Romania or Ukraine have not got enough capacity to produce electricity. It means Russia is using Transnistria as a political tool.

Matthew Rojansky (2011: 3) is giving us very important information about the Russian force in the region. Rojansky claims that:

"Russia has expressed an interest in maintaining its current force of some 1,500 troops (around 400 of which serve as peacekeepers) in the region. Moscow's interest in keeping a military presence in Transnistria has a number of possible explanations, but is most likely largely symbolic. The contingent on the left bank gives Russia a foothold in this part of Europe, an image of strategic depth against possible threats from the West, and perhaps also some psychological leverage in relations with Ukraine, which is partially encircled by Russian military outposts."

With respect to Moldova Constitution, Moldova is a neutrality state. According to the constitution article 11:

" (1) The Republic of Moldova proclaims its permanent neutrality.  
(2) The Republic of Moldova does not admit the stationing of any foreign military troops on its territory. "

Even the neutrality Moldova is committed to NATO. According to NATO, Moldova seek to draw closer to Euro-Atlantic standards and institutions. Moldova started the relations with NATO in 1992. Moldova is a member of North Atlantic Cooperation Council since 1997. With respect to NATO internet site (nato.int, 01.11.2021):

"NATO has no direct role in the conflict resolution process in the region of Transnistria. However, the Allies closely follow developments in the region and full expect Russia to abide by its international obligations, including respecting the territorial integrity of neighbouring countries and their right to choose their own security agreements."

The above NATO annotation, NATO is a side of the conflict. Due to neutrality Moldova engaged to NATO for standing in front of Russia. Transnistria is an important territory and geopolitic importance for all actors even NATO.

#### **d. Economic Reason**

The economic diversity is coming from history in Moldova. Largely as parallel to historical and cultural divides, the society of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) experienced different socio-economic lives during the Soviet era. The left bank of the Dniester Riveron was industrial cities with a multi-ethnic, de facto Russian-speaking, frequently allochthonous economic, party and administrative elite; on the other, heavily agricultural areas with a largely Romanian-speaking native population. Especially in the heavy industry and arms factories geographically concentrated in the area of subsequent secession, the Soviet elites found themselves facing increasing pressure from the Moldovan national movement (Büscher: 25).

Today the economic differentiation is going on. While Bessarabia is agrucultural area, Transnistria has got industrial cities. That means, as a sovareign state, Moldova can not be an alternative for the people who live in Transnistria. Actually nobody can put forward that there is a prosperous society in the left bank of the river. But Moldova is not richer than Transnistria.

Moldova is a very weak state. It is today Europe's poorest country. In reference to the National Bureau Statistic Office, recently 2.597.100 people live and stay at in Moldova. On the other hand, the datas show that populatin of Moldova is 3.543.708 in 2019 except Transnistria (statistica.md, 02.11.2021). It means 946.608 Moldovans have left the country because of economic reasons. Moreover, Moldova has got very big external debt against the income in a year (GDP). Other means, the external debt is over 50 per cent of the budget. Moldova owes significant debt to Russia, which provides all of its energy needs (Karaaslan, 2006: 97).

According to Oazu Nantoi (2006: 5), there is no effor to get the counrty's reunification. As Nantoi write:

"since the summer of 1992, no Moldovan government adopted a plan for the country's reunification, based on a realistic approach to the essence of the conflict, whose implementation would require mobilization of the whole society's resources. The Republic of Moldova did not become an attractive example for the people of the Transnistria. since its declaration of independence on 2 September 1990 the TMR has successfully established and consolidated its own state-like structure. Alongside a President and a Parliament in Transnistria one can also find a Supreme Court and a National Bank, which issues its own currency, the Transdnestrian rouble. "

To repeat, Moldova was divided into two parts. Bessarabia was basically an agricultural region, a source of cereals, vegetables, fruit, and wine, while Transnistria was the main industrial region of the country. It was even similarly in 1991, even today. The table given below clearly illustrates this situation.

Table: Transnistria in the Moldovan Economy, 1991 (Regional Production as Percentage of National Total)

Large electrical machines	100%
Power transformers	100%
Gas containers	100%
Cotton textiles	96.6%
Electric energy	87.5%
Cement	58.1%
Low-horsepower electric engines	55.8%
Sheet metal	23.5%
Agricultural products	13.1%

Source: Lieutenant Colonel Mihai-Cristian Statie. *Transnistria: The Hot Nature of a Frozen Conflict*, 2013, p. 30.

When looking at the table, it is clear that industrial productions were produced in Transnistria. It means plants and factories were built in Transnistria in USSR time. After USSR, because of conflicts, all industrial means of production were stayed at Transnistria. Even today the status quo is stated. It is an settled status quo. Because the actors make profit from situations. The Transnistrian leadership was aware that the independence of Moldova would have managed and conducted the redistribution of the control of the economic resources.

The major Soviet-era industrial assets in Transnistria are the MMZ steel plant and Rybnitsa Cement plant in the north, and the Cuciurgan power plant in the south. All of these are at least partially controlled by Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs, who profited from Tiraspol's privatization of these assets during the last decade. To illustrate Russia's Gazprom sells gas to enterprises in Transnistria, which pay reduced fees for the gas to Tiraspol, which in turn simply allocates that money to the state budget. The resulting Gazprom debt, now worth over \$7.4 billion (jamestown.org, 02.11.2021). Simply put, the unresolved status of Transnistria allows oligarchs to profit from industrial assets that belong to average Moldovans and gas that belongs to the Russian people (Allin, L and Chamberlian-Creange, 2009: 334).

Russia support Transnistria in terms of economy. According to Suprague (2016: 17) In addition to military support, Russian financial assistance keeps the Transnistrian economy solvent. Tax revenues are not enough to cover basic expenses, so Russia provides \$100 million annually and free natural gas supplies worth an additional \$270 million. Today economic supporting from Russia is going on. As a result, although Transnistria's population is %20 due to Moldova, it produces %40

of gross national product (GNP). Therefore per capita income in Transnistria is higher than the right bank of the Dniester.

## Conclusion

The Republic of Moldova is a lockdown small country where is stated in the Southeast Europe between Romania and Ukraina. The territory of Moldova is known as Bessarabia. Bessarabia is stated between the Prut and the Dniester Rivers. It as a gate for East to reach to West, on the other hand it is a gate for West to resitrein to East world.

Transnistria is a part of the Republic of Moldova. But it is an independence state as de facto even no countries recognise the independence of it. Quite the reverse Moldova is an unitary state in terms of its constitution. As regards the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, the first article is written that The Republic of Moldova is a sovereign, independent, unitary and indivisible state. However Gagauzia is a territory region in Moldova with respect to the Constitution Article 111, Transnistria is a secession region. When the other factors is taken into account, Transnistria is defined as frozen conflict zone in the Political Science and International Relation literature. No doubt the frozen conflict reason results from the Russian Federation such as Donbas, Abkhazia, Nagorno Karaback etc. When Russia uses the conflict zone policy, it could find enoght reason in the region. Of course the speration ideas root can be observed in the history.

Except Russian invading the region, Transnistria and the right bank of the river have not lived the same political structure even they have got a lot of similir properties such as religion, language, ethnics etc.

Herein four reason have been explained for unsolved situation. It is claimed that historical, tethnic, geopolitic and economic reasons are the main issues for Transnistria conflict. Otherwise Transnistria is a frozen conflict zone because of four subjects are related to the Russian Federation. So the territory is a competetion and engagement region between the West World and the Russian Federation.

Firstly historical reason is the main fact for the conflict. Except USSR times which had lasted for about 50 years, Bessarabia and Transnistria regions could not live together in history. Even USSR time, they positioned as different especially in economic structure. In other words there is no historical motivation to connect Chisinaue to Tiraspol. Every time the left bank of the Dniester River has been belonging to the East World, on the contrary the right bank of the river.

Ethnicity counts as the second reason for the conflict. Actully Transnistria is more homogeneous as ethnicity against Bessarabia. But independently of the ethnicity, Russian ethnic idea dominates to Transnistria. In moldova Romanian culture also the most important reality especially in the north of Moldova. Of course ethnic views are effecting the nationalist ideology in two sides.

While the right bank of the Dniester (Moldova) is overwhelmingly Moldovanist or Romanianist except Gagauzia which are generally Russianist little Gagauz nationalist and pan-Turkism, the left on the bank of the river (Transnistria) is generally supporting Russianism.

Thirdly, geopolitic issue is very important trippet for the conflict. Transnistria stretches along the Dniester River. Because of the fact that Transnistria states from Bucovina to Black Sea (Odessa), Russia holds the West gate. Transnistria has got 4.163 km squared teritory and 14th Russian Army stays in there. Russia can use the teritory as military base and there is no symmetric power in the region against to Russia. Also the teritory is an economic station for Russia. Especially Gazprom uses the teritory as if a gas station. In addition to this, Transnistria controls the west border of Ukrania. It is a springboard to Black Sea and Crimea.

Fourtly and the last but not least economic reason is very important issue for the conflict. Transnistria is an industrial area against to Bessarabia. The natural gas which is Russian or Gazprom gas is approaching to Moldova on Transnistria. Also electricity produces in Transnistria and sends to Moldova. Other industrial productions, that Moldova needs them, produce or make in Transnistria even cement. That reality creates two important results. Firstly an economic disparity is observed between two banks of the river in favor of Transnistria. Secondly the elits of Transnistria are not willing to solve the problem.

Transnistria conflict has been living since USSR dissolved. Until 2021 the parties have attempted to solve the problem a lot of times but unfortunately they could not find a solution way. In that article why there is no solution has been explained. Even the problem is seen between Moldova and Transnistria, there are a lot of actors in the conflict. These days Chisinau are looking for solving the problem with EU but Russia objects EU to interfere as usual. Transnistria will be defined as the frozen conflict zone in literature for along time. There does not seem to find a solution in the near future.

## **References**

- Acar, K. (2007). *Moldova Ulus Kimliđi Üzerine*. Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi, 5/1, p. 1-23.
- Aksu, F. (2020). *Geopolitics and Strategy*. TC Anadolu University Publication, 3991: Eskişehir.
- Akgül, F. İ. (2021). *Roman Kadını: Çoklu Kimlik Kesişiminde Ezilenler*. 2. Baskı, Orion Kitabevi: Ankara.
- Büscher, K. (2016). *Not Frozen: The Transnistria Conflict in Light of the Crisis over Ukraine*. (Sabina Ficher, ed.). Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: Berlin.

- Chamberlain-Creang & R. and Allin, L. (2009). Acquiring Assets, Debts and Citizens: Russia and the Micro-Foundations of Transnistria's Stalemated Conflict. *Demokratizatsiya*, P. 330-355.
- Charles, k. (1994). Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan-Romanianism. *Slavic Review*, Vol.53, No. 2, p.348.
- Gasca, V. (2012). Country report: Moldova. *EUDO citizenship Observatory*, European University Institute, Robert Scuman Centre for Advanced Studies.
- Goltz, T. (1993). Letter from Eurasia: The Hidden Russian Hand. *Foreign Policy*, no. 92, pp. 92-116.
- Karaaslan, H. (2006). *The Role of the Organisation for Security and the Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the Transnistria Conflict and the Russian Factor*. Master Thesis, the Middle East Technical University, Ankara.
- King, C. (2000). *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*. California: Hoover Institution.
- Koçak, Z. (2017). 1787-1792 Osmanlı Rus Savaşında Değişen Dengeler ve Yaş Antlaşması. *Tarih İnceleme Dergisi*, XXXII/2, p. 459-490.
- Koszel, B. (2020). The Role of Germany in the Transnistria Conflict. *Przegląd Strategiczny* 2, Issue 13, p: 112-127.
- Lubicz-Miszewski, M. (2012). Geneza, przebieg i próby przezwyciężenia konfliktu o Naddniestrze. *Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL*, No. 3.
- Minzarari, D. (2010). *Moldova: the Ties that Don't Bind*. Transitions Online.
- Nantoi, O. (2006). The Ukrainian Plan on Transdnistr: Pros and Cons. *Eurojournal*, 2005, Available At <http://eurojournal.org/files/nantoi1.pdf>, Accessed 1 March 2006, p.5.
- Oleksy, P. (2013). Mołdawski nacjonalizm vs. Naddniestrzańska państwowotwórczość – przesłanki społecznej mobilizacji w konflikcie naddniestrzańskim. *SensusHistoriae*, Vol. XI.
- Patlis, L. & MCLAuchlan, J.S. (2015). 20 Years of "Autonomy" For the Gagauz: Reflections on Devolutionary Trends in the Republic Of Moldova. *Revista Română de Drept Comparat* 01:54-87.
- Rezun, M. (1993). *Nationalism and the Breakup of an Empire: Russia and its Periphery*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

- Rojnsky, M. (2011). *Prospects for Unfreezing Moldova's Frozen Conflict in Transnistria*. U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Washington, D.C.
- Roper, S.D. (2002). *Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transdnestr and Gagauzia*. in James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse (eds), *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union: Regions in Conflict*, London: Frank Cass Publishers.
- Solak J. (2014). *Mołdawia: republika na trzy pęknięcia. Historyczno-społeczny, militarny i geopolityczny wymiar. zamrożonego konfliktu o Naddniestrze*, Toruń.
- Sprague, A. (2016). *Russian Meddling in Its Near Abroad: The Use of Frozen Conflicts as a Foreign Policy Tool*. Institut Barcelona Estudis Internationals.
- Statie, M. C. (2013). *Transnistria: The Hot Nature of a Frozen Conflict*. Master's Thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth: Kansas.
- Vahl, M. & Emerson, M. (2004). *Moldova and the Transnistrian Conflict*. *JEMIE - Journal on ethnopolitics and minority issues in Europe*, 1, 1-29.
- <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-gazprom-ready-to-pounce-on-moldovan-prey-part-2/>, (02.11.2021).
- [https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice\\_POP\\_POP010/POP010100.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice_POP_POP010/POP010100.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774), 02.11.2021.
- <https://statistica.gov.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=295&id=2234>, (31.10.2021).
- <https://statistica.gov.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=479&>, (31.10.2021).
- [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49727.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49727.htm), (01.11.2021).