

THE EU'S PEACEBUILDING IN MOLDOVA: ANALYSIS OF THE EUBAM AS A CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING STRATEGY IN MOLDOVA-TRANSNISTRIA CONFLICT

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) as a global peacebuilding actor plays an active role in conflict zones to prevent conflict onset, transform conflict structure, and build peace. Although the procedure of peacebuilding is complex and it needs a longtime to achieve sustainable peace, the EU applies various approaches to prevent conflict onset and to build peace. The study explores the EU's role as a conflict preventing and peace-building actor in the Moldova-Transnistria conflict that erupted following the dissolution of the USSR. As the analysis of the EU peacebuilding objectives and structures illustrate, the EU follows a liberal peacebuilding model that is based on state-building presumptions. The EU follows a similar strategy to transform the Moldova-Transnistria conflict and integrate the separatist region into Moldova. The case of the European Border Assistance Mission to Moldova (EUBAM) from liberal peacebuilding and the EU's peacebuilding perspectives examines advantages and disadvantages to building sustainable peace in the conflict zones. The study highlights that in order to transform the conflict the EU should increase involvement with the breakaway region to evolve its relations with Moldova and the EU. Another necessary step is the involvement of the civil society from both sides in order to build confidence between the two societies at the local level. While the EU recognizes the importance of 'local' actors in sustainable peacebuilding, it lacks mechanisms that include these actors in the peacebuilding process.

Keywords: Liberal Peace, The EU Peacebuilding, Moldova-Transnistria Conflict, EUBAM

AB'NİN MOLDOVA'DA BARIŞ İNŞASI: MOLDOVA-TRANSDİNYESTER İHTİLAFINDA ÇATIŞMA ÖNLEME VE BARIŞ İNŞA ETME STRATEJİSİ OLARAK EUBAM'IN İNCELENMESİ

Öz

Avrupa Birliği (AB), global düzeyde çatışmaların alevlenmesini önlemek, çatışma yapısını dönüştürmek ve barışı inşa etmek için çatışma bölgelerinde aktif rol oynamaktadır. Barışı inşası zor aynı zamanda, sürdürülebilir barışın sağlanması uzun zamana ihtiyaç duyulan bir süreçtir. AB çatışmaların başlamasını önlemek ve barışı inşa etmek için çeşitli yaklaşımlar uygulamaktadır. Bu çalışma, SSCB'nin dağılmasının ardından patlak veren Moldova-Transdinyester ihtilafında AB'nin çatışmayı önleyici ve barışı tesis eden bir aktör olarak rolünü araştırmaktadır. AB barış inşası hedefleri ve yapılarının analizinin gösterdiği gibi, AB, devlet inşası varsayımlarına dayanan liberal barış inşası modelini takip etmektedir. AB, Moldova-Transdinyester ihtilafını dönüştürmek ve ayrılıkçı bölgeyi Moldova'ya entegre etmek için benzer stratejiyi izlemektedir. Bu perspektiften Moldova Avrupa Sınır Yardım Misyonu'nu (EUBAM) inceleyen bu çalışma, AB'nin barış inşası perspektiflerini, çatışmalarda sürdürülebilir barış inşa etmenin avantaj ve dezavantajlarını tartışmaktadır. Çalışma, çatışmayı dönüştürmek için AB'nin Moldova ve AB ile ilişkilerini geliştirmek için ayrılıkçı bölgeyle olan ilişkisini artırması gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Bir diğer önemli adım ise, yerel düzeyde iki toplum arasında güven inşa etmek için her iki taraftan da sivil toplumun sürece katılımıdır. AB, sürdürülebilir barış inşasında "yerel" aktörlerin önemini kabul ederken, bu aktörleri barış inşa sürecine dahil eden mekanizmalardan yoksundur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Liberal Barış, AB Barış İnşası, Moldova-Transdinyester Çatışması, EUBAM

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Introduction

The EU's interaction with the post-soviet regions has not witnessed significant changes after the end of the Cold War. In the 1990s the EU had constrained and marginal relations with the post-soviet states. Although the post-soviet states had to deal with secessionist conflicts and civil wars, the EU did not involve or engage to prevent or to transform these conflicts in the early 1990s. However, beginning from the mid 2000s the EU began to adopt policies and strategies towards to the region and increased its role as a peacebuilding actor to prevent conflict onset in its neighborhood and consolidate peace and security.

Unlike its inactivity in the 1990s, after the integration of former communist states of Eastern Europe to the EU in early 2000s, the post-soviet region become a neighbor and the Moldova-Transnistria conflict was directly located on the EU doorstep. Therefore, the EU's interests and policies focused to transform this conflict and prevent escalation and sustain peace. In this regard the EU launched several policies and initiatives towards these countries, particularly focusing on the Moldova-Transnistria conflict by establishing the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2003, the European Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) in 2005, and The Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009. In the context of these strategies and initiatives, the EU aims to transform conflict by applying both top-down approach through promoting democratic rules, norms, governance, and reforms, and bottom-up transforming civil-society and funding local businesses and NGOs to build trust between parties.

EUBAM is one of these initiatives that has attracted special attention. Funded and monitored by the EU, EUBAM's objectives are to contribute to the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict by supporting the development of confidence building measures, reform of legislation, improved procedures in customs, trade, transport and trans-boundary management, implementation of Integrated Border Management (UBM) practices at the Moldova-Ukraine border, and assist Moldovan and Ukrainian authorities to combat cross-border crimes and illegal trafficking more effectively along others.

To understand EUBAM and the EU's strategy in Moldova-Transnistria conflict, the paper first reviews liberal peacebuilding model and the EU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy. Following that a brief historical and current dynamics of the Moldova Transnistria conflict presented. Then, the EU's policies examined to disclose prospects of Moldova's Europeanization path. In this context, EUBAM closely observed as a case study to analyze the EU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy practically. The paper ends with a conclusion that debates advantages and disadvantageous of the EU's EUBAM policy and constraints of peacebuilding in the conflict. The paper employs the case study qualitative method to explore the EU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy in the Moldova-Transdnistria conflict. Official documents and statements have been used as a primary sources and scholarly literature on the topics used as secondary sources.

2. Liberal Peacebuilding Theory

Although there is not an explicitly unified definition of the liberal peace theory, it is generally based on the assumption that democratic states are more peaceful than non-democratic states.¹ Besides, democratic states are less prone to war and democratic states generally do not fall into the inter-societal and inter-ethnic conflict because they have a functioning public sphere and elections that allow their constituents to change and adjust their leaders and laws by peaceful means.² These assumptions lead international actors, mainly in the global north, to conduct peacebuilding operations in the global south and war affected states. The assumption of global north states and international institutions is that marketization and democratization are the remedy to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace in the world. As Paris puts it "the central tenet of liberal peacebuilding is the assumption that the surest foundation for peace, both within and between states, is market democracy, that is, a liberal democratic

¹ Doyle, Michael W. "Liberalism and world politics." *American political science review* 80, no. 4 (1986): 1151-1169. and "Three pillars of the liberal peace." *American political science review* 99, no. 3 (2005): 463-466.

² Dahl, Robert A. "Equality versus Inequality1." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 29, no. 4 (1996): 639-648.

polity and a market-oriented economy.”³ Liberal internationalism was the guide for international peace building organizations and agencies.

Liberal peacebuilding was seen as a superior and unchallenged approach in peacebuilding. It was supported by leading states, international organizations, and international financial institutions like the US, the UK, Australia, France, Canada, Germany, the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Mac Ginty argues that non-western peacebuilding approaches, such as the African Union’s initiative ‘African solutions to African problems,’ have been co-opted as agents of the liberal peace and not considered independent and original initiatives.⁴ Thus, liberal peacebuilding framework is standardized, and its externally programmed top-down agenda is aimed preventing conflict eruption, and it includes conducting Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), and Security Sector Reform (SSR), monitoring and contributing governance reform, marketization and economic restructuring and supporting development of civil society and confidence building.

External top-down liberal peacebuilding aims to restructure political, social, and economic structures of conflict torn states. Following the fall of Yugoslavia, inter-ethnic conflict erupted between Bosnians and Serbs, motivating the international community to intervene to build peace. The agenda of the international community was to rebuild Bosnia-Herzegovina. Therefore, new political institutions were engineered, and the flag and symbols of the state were re-created.⁵ Moreover, peacebuilders monitored the state budget, financial expenditures, and school curriculums, even if elected politicians were too nationalist and not adaptable for the peacebuilders’ agenda were disbarred.⁶ However, as Belloni et al. present it, liberal

³ Paris, Roland. "Peacebuilding and the limits of liberal internationalism." *International security* 22, no. 2 (1997), p.56.

⁴ Mac Ginty, Roger. "Indigenous peace-making versus the liberal peace." *Cooperation and conflict* 43, no. 2 (2008), p.144.

⁵ Mac Ginty, "Indigenous peace-making versus the liberal peace."

⁶ See Chandler, David. *Bosnia: faking democracy after Dayton*. Pluto Press, 2000; Kostić, Roland. *Ambivalent peace: external peacebuilding threatened identity and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Vol. 78. Ambivalent Peace, 2007.

peacebuilders are so much obsessed with their agenda that they have neglected the social needs and possibilities for social transformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷

On the ground, peacebuilding missions did not develop as liberal peacebuilding theoretically assumptions. Indeed, the foremost goals of peace missions need to be clearly expressed to judge the success of the peacebuilding operations. On other hand, as Call and Cousens, explain the success depends on approaches; the maximalist (eliminating root causes of conflicts and transforming war-torn society into market democracy like western states), minimalist (consolidate peace and prevent eruption of war), and moderate (no renewal of conflict and decent governance).⁸ A proponent of liberal peacebuilding, Paris argues that overall, liberal peace building missions in the 1990s and early 2000s were not successful (except in Namibia) out of the eight countries that hosted peacebuilding missions.⁹ At the same time, he argues that all other alternative strategies that are not rooted in liberal principles would likely create more problems than solutions.¹⁰ Paris argues that one of the first mistakes of liberal peacebuilding missions is to conduct marketization and democratization in short period before achieving stable and stainable institutions that gain the trust of the public.¹¹ He offers an institutionalization before liberalization approach that tries to support durable political, civil, and economic institutions and a gradual transformation of society. Paris and other proponents of liberal peacebuilding theory assume that the remedy for war-torn societies are marketization and democratization, without considering the local conditions which make realizing these reforms difficult.¹²

Liberal peacebuilding is consistently supported by northern states and international organizations. The material power and financial capacity of these states and

⁷ Belloni, Roberto, Stefanie Kappler, and Jasmin Ramovic. "Bosnia-Herzegovina: Domestic agency and the inadequacy of the liberal peace." in *Post-liberal peace transitions: Between peace formation and state formation*, (Ed) Oliver Richmond, 2016, 47-64.

⁸ Call, Charles T., and Elizabeth M. Cousens. "Ending wars and building peace: International responses to war-torn societies." *International studies perspectives* 9, no. 1, 2008, 1-21.

⁹ Paris, Roland. "Peacebuilding and the limits of liberal internationalism." and Paris, Roland. *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

¹⁰ Paris, Roland. "Saving liberal peacebuilding." *Review of international studies* 36, no. 2, 2010, p.357.

¹¹ Paris, Roland. *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict*.

¹² Paris, Roland. "Saving liberal peacebuilding."

institutions enabled them to enforce their agenda on war-torn states, by promising financial awards in return for reforms that allowed international institutions to set norms and rules. This created a perception of peacebuilding imperialism where northern states used peacebuilding institutions to further their own interests, given their personal monitoring of the activities in foreign countries. According to Meyer, sponsored peacebuilding missions presume and reflect the provider countries' interests, therefore should not be viewed as 'innocent assistance'.¹³

As the external and top-down approach, liberal peacebuilding faced challenges locally and at the same time in scholarship. In addition to its achievements, Richmond and Mac Ginty present critiques and alternative approaches.¹⁴ There are different approaches that were theorized and conceptualized to be alternatives to liberal peacebuilding.¹⁵ The power and financial capacity of the global north enable them to maintain liberal peacebuilding structures, but alternatives should be considered since even the proponents of the liberal peacebuilding themselves agree that it mostly failed to achieve its goals.

3. The EU's Peacebuilding Strategy

The European Union is one of the major actors in peacebuilding globally and in its neighborhood. Like the United Nations, International Financial Institutions, and NGOs, the EU also based its peacebuilding framework on the liberal peacebuilding context. However, as Paris presents, accelerated marketization and democratization peacebuilding approaches mostly fail due to accelerated state and civil society institutionalization.¹⁶ In this context, the EU both follows liberal peacebuilding but adding its own characteristics to its missions.

¹³ Meyer, Jörg. "The concealed violence of modern peace (-making)." *Millennium* 36, no. 3, 2008, 555-574.

¹⁴ Richmond, Oliver P., and Roger Mac Ginty. "Where now for the critique of the liberal peace?." *Cooperation and Conflict* 50, no. 2, 2015, 171-189.

¹⁵ See Richmond, Oliver, Annika Björkdahl, and Stefanie Kappler. "The emerging EU peacebuilding framework: confirming or transcending liberal peacebuilding?." *Cambridge review of international affairs* 24, no. 3, 2011, 449-469; Mac Ginty, Roger. "Hybrid peace: The interaction between top-down and bottom-up peace." *Security dialogue* 41, no. 4, 2010, 391-412; Hancock, Landon E. "Deliberative peacebuilding: agency and development in post-conflict practice." *Peacebuilding* 8, no. 2, 2020, 139-158.

¹⁶ Paris, Roland. *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict*.

The EU is described as a normative peacebuilding power due to promoting its own experiences of institutions, norms, and values in liberal peacebuilding missions.¹⁷ The EU is itself a peace project that emerged after World War II. With the enlargement after 2004, the Lisbon Treaty that reformed the functioning of the union, the EU defined "The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples" (Treaty of Lisbon, Title I, Article 2). The EU's peacebuilding programs, and methods have developed vis a vis with the UN's strategy and have adopted a series of documents on the methods, principles, and objectives of peacebuilding that make it hard to define it clearly. As Duke and Courtier illustrate, the EU applies a multidimensional and comprehensive peacebuilding approach.¹⁸ Thus, the EU conducts top-down and bottom-up approaches simultaneously and peacebuilding strategies are not fixed. As it is stated "a multi-dimensional approach through the use of all available policies and instruments aimed at conflict prevention, management and resolution are essential. But the scope of the 'comprehensive approach' will be expanded further."¹⁹

Although this conceptual and strategy vagueness persists in the EU's documents, it is one of the main actors that supports peacebuilding operations, conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding globally and in its neighborhood. As Hazen illustrates peacekeeping and peacebuilding are not effective when they are applied separately, and peacekeeping indeed should serve as a basis for peacebuilding and these two must be integrated.²⁰ In this context, the EU uses conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding strategies as well as top-down and bottom-up

¹⁷ See Tocci, Nathalie, Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor?. Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2008; Richmond, Oliver, Annika Björkdahl, and Stefanie Kappler. "The emerging EU peacebuilding framework: confirming or transcending liberal peacebuilding?." Cambridge review of international affairs 24, no. 3, 2011, 449-469.

¹⁸ Duke, Simon W., and Aurélie Courtier. EU Peacebuilding: Concepts, players and instruments. Centre for the Law of EU External Relations (CLEER), 2009.

¹⁹ European Union. "Shared vision, common action: A stronger Europe. A global strategy for the European Union's foreign and security policy", 2016, p.28.

²⁰ Hazen, Jennifer M. "Can peacekeepers be peacebuilders?." *International Peacekeeping* 14, no. 3, 2007, 323-338.

approaches simultaneously in the long term to build sustainable peace in its neighborhood.

The EU's peacebuilding framework rests on human security, effective multilateralism, responsibility to protect, national capacity, partnership, and local ownership as necessary ingredients of sustainable peace. The EU's peacebuilding missions contain promotion of democracy, respecting and defending human rights, and supporting civil society. According to Richmond et al. the EU's peacebuilding strategies are:

framed by both the aims of liberal peacebuilding to build stable liberal states, but also to transcend the state via regional integration to produce a more emancipatory version of peacebuilding, whether within or beyond the EU. It does this by applying the liberal peace framework, through association and membership, donor activities and a range of activities in the realms of institutional reform, security and policing, development, human rights and the rule of law, civil society funding, and through its normative and social justice aspirations.²¹

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The EU has applied and supported liberal peacebuilding, but it also applies various other approaches depending on the context and structure of the conflict states it is operating in.

On the other hand, Naturski argues that the EU's peacebuilding prioritizes state centric approaches, which emphasize security, political and economic institutionalization.²² Analyzing the EU's peacebuilding missions in the world and the EU's neighborhood, Naturski infers that the EU follows two strategies in peacebuilding: short term and long term.²³ In the context of short term, the EU supports the resolution of conflicts and the elimination of security threats with the funds that donors make immediately available to recipient states. In the long-term strategy the EU aims to eliminate root causes of a conflict and transform the state institutions, social and economic structures.²⁴ As it has been stated, as the union of liberal democratic states, the EU

²¹ Richmond, Oliver, Annika Björkdahl, and Stefanie Kappler. "The emerging EU peacebuilding framework: confirming or transcending liberal peacebuilding?", p.455.

²² Naturski, Michal. *The European Union peacebuilding approach: Governance and practices of the instrument of stability*. Vol. 111. DEU, 2011.

²³ Naturski, Michal. **Ibid.**

²⁴ Naturski, **Ibid.**

supports liberal peacebuilding and funds and supports reforms in this context of conflict affected societies.

Diez et al. states that the EU's integrationist approach in its neighborhood increases the Union's peacebuilding potential.²⁵ States that are located within the borders of the EU have the potential to be future members of the union and are closely supported by it to transform and conduct reforms to increase their standards to meet union requirements. Thus, the EU specifically monitors and gives assistance in support of reforms that focus on market liberalization and a strong civil society and in return countries get access to a visa for travelling in the rest of the EU member states. The EU's goal is just and durable peacebuilding, it follows liberal peace framework with a state-building and integrationist approach in the conflict affected states and aims to integrate these states into the EU and global community on liberal terms. Richmond et al. state that EU peacebuilding efforts represent the third generation of peacebuilding²⁶ where they also face the challenges that the liberal peacebuilding attempts face, including "lacking local and contextual legitimacy, imposing external norms, institutions, concepts and practices, and resting on coercion or conditionality."²⁷ Björkdahl states that the EU have more potential as a "normative power" than a "hard power" focusing on security realms.²⁸ Moreover, Mac Ginty states that while the EU representatives highlight the importance of 'the local' it still could not operationalize this approach in peacebuilding missions.²⁹ The EU remains a technocratic institution and it has "difficulty operating in ways that are ad hoc, fast-reacting, and outside of technocratic parameters."³⁰

²⁵ Diez, Thomas, Stephan Stetter, and Mathias Albert. "The European Union and border conflicts: the transformative power of integration." *International organization* 60, no. 3, 2006, 563-593.

²⁶ For more information on different interpretation of liberal peacebuilding and generations of peace look at Richmond, O., Björkdahl, A., & Kappler, S., 2011, The emerging EU peacebuilding framework: confirming or transcending liberal peacebuilding?. *Cambridge review of international affairs*, 24(3), 449-469.

²⁷ Richmond, Oliver, Annika Björkdahl, and Stefanie Kappler. "The emerging EU peacebuilding framework: confirming or transcending liberal peacebuilding?."

²⁸ Björkdahl, A. "Building Peace—Normative and Military Powers in EU Peace Operations." *Normative Power Europe*, 2011, 103-127.

²⁹ Mac Ginty, Roger. "The limits of technocracy and local encounters: The European Union and peacebuilding." *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 1, 2018, 166-179.

³⁰ Mac Ginty, Roger. *Ibid.*

Thus, as it can be seen, as a representative of the global north and as a union, the EU follows the liberal peacebuilding agenda with its various interpretations and coordinates its peace operations with international institutions and NGOs. The EU does not have a specific articulately defined peacebuilding structure and agenda, it has different institutions that follow peacebuilding missions and reforms in conflicted affected states. Moreover, “the quality and quantity of EU peacebuilding interventions depends on whether the post-conflict state is a potential membership candidate (as is the case in the Western Balkans), or whether the EU is pursuing strategic long-term interests further afield.”³¹ Overall, the EU follows varying strategies and a gradualist approach in its peacebuilding missions. It aims to transform the root causes and of conflicts and particularly rewards countries depending on reforms that they conduct in political and economic spheres. Following a brief overview of the Moldova-Transnistria conflict, rest of the paper will analyze how the EU applied its conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies in the conflict.

4. Moldova-Transnistria Conflict and Status-Quo

The Moldova Transnistria conflict erupted following the dissolution of the USSR between Moldova SSR and its region Transnistria (Pridnestrov’e in Russian and the official name is the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic). Transnistria is a breakaway non-recognized, self-declared independent state, recognized as part of Moldova by the international community. The region is located on the left bank of Dniester River and Ukrainian border. Although Moldovan/Romanians constitute majority of the population in Moldova (Moldovan 78.2%, Ukrainian 8.4%, Russian 5.8%, Gagauz 4.4%, Bulgarian 1.9%, and others 1.3%), in Transnistria ethnic Moldovans make up 30%, Russians 29%, and Ukrainians 28%. Along with ethnic dynamics, historical developments, indeed two banks of Dniester River have been exposed different external influences, while the west bank consisted of Roman-speaking people, the east bank, Transnistria, populated by Russophone Slavs, also could be seen among the causes of the conflict. These ethnohistorical dynamics created fear over growing

³¹ Richmond et al, "The emerging EU peacebuilding framework: confirming or transcending liberal peacebuilding?." p.457.

Moldovan nationalism because Moldovan's goal of unification with Romania and nationalist policies were among main factors in the secessionist conflict.³²

The conflict erupted as the Moldovan government replaced Cyrillic script with Latin alphabet in 1989. This made life and interactions with the government difficult for people who were Russian and used to Cyrillic script. Following that, in Tiraspol, capital of Transnistria, authorities forbid the use of Latin script in the Transnistria region and demanded economic independence and the use of Russian as its official language. When Moldova rejected these demands, Transnistria declared itself the Dniester Moldovan Soviet Republic as part of the USSR. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the dispute between Moldova and breakaway Transnistria authorities transformed into the war. With the support of Russian Cossacks and the Russian 14th Army, Tiraspol authorities took control of all Transnistria. Parties signed a ceasefire agreement on July 21, 1992, that ended skirmishes which cost around 1500 lives and created a secure zone that controlled by Russian, Moldovan, and Transnistrian authorities.

While the ceasefire agreement is succeeded to end hostilities, absence of peace treaty creates a fragile frozen conflict. Kuechler argues that connotations of a frozen conflict create an image of a fragile and unstable political environment where violence could erupt any time.³³ However, as Peterka-Benton states the solution of the conflict is "frozen" and the situation in the region remains unchanged since the mid 1990s.³⁴

Moreover, unlike that ethnic plurality could be seen one of the causes of the conflict, Ranieri argues that the main reasons were economic and political.³⁵ In Transnistria, the ruling elites were Russian, and the prospective independence of Moldova

³² Kaufman, Stuart J. "Spiraling to ethnic war: elites, masses, and Moscow in Moldova's civil war." *International Security* 21, no. 2, 1996, 108-138; Peterka-Benton, Daniela. "Arms Trafficking in Transnistria: A European Security Threat?." *Journal of Applied Security Research* 7, no. 1, 2012, 71-92.

³³ Kuechler, Florian. *The Role of the European Union in Moldova's Transnistria Conflict*. Vol. 78. ibidem-Verlag/ibidem Press, 2012.

³⁴ Peterka-Benton, Daniela. "Arms Trafficking in Transnistria: A European Security Threat?."

³⁵ Ranieri, Marco. "The EU and the conflict in Transnistria." *SAfE Paper* 1, 2007, 77-87.

threatened their privileged status, so they fomented an ethnic conflict to keep control on the region.³⁶

Thus far, negotiations between the parties have not produced a final peace plan. In 2003 parties were close to a solution for the conflict when Vladimir Putin's adviser Dmitry Kozak held secret talks between Igor Smirinov (so-called Transnistrian president) and then Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin. The plan proposed the creation of an asymmetric federation, which would give Transnistria right of veto to future changes to the constitution and Russian peacekeeping forces will be allowed to stay until 2020. The plan was rejected by Voronin because of pressure from the public and western states.³⁷ Afterwards the US and the EU gained observer status in negotiations along with Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE, known as 5+2 talks. Following Moldova's 2005 law that created the Transnistria autonomous territorial unit under Moldova in 2006, the region held a referendum for independence and integration with Russia rather than Moldova, the referendum has not been recognized by the international community.³⁸

5. The EU's Policy in the Region: Europeanization of Moldova and sustainability of peace?

Moldovan internal politics witnesses uncertain developments. The Moldovan political environment has divided into pro-Russian Communist Party, Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) and pro-European coalition groups. In 2009 a pro-European coalition ousted the PCRM, which had ruled Moldova since 2001, however after they gained notoriety for corruption and fraud that was estimated to be around US \$1 billion,³⁹ pro-Russian Igor Dodon was elected as a president in

³⁶ Küchler, Florian. *The Role of the European Union in Moldova's Transnistria Conflict*.

Peterka-Benton, Daniela. "Arms Trafficking in Transnistria: A European Security Threat?."

³⁷ Wolff, Stefan. *The Transnistrian issue: Moving beyond the status-quo*. **EUR-OP**, 2012.

³⁸ Küchler, *The Role of the European Union in Moldova's Transnistria Conflict*. Peterka-Benton, Daniela. "Arms Trafficking in Transnistria: A European Security Threat?."

³⁹ Montesano, Francesco Saverio, Tony van der Togt, and Wouter Zweers. *The Europeanisation of Moldova: is the EU on the right track?*. Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2016

December 2016 and was later replaced by pro-western Maia Sandu in November 2020.⁴⁰

Since the Russian initiative to resolve conflict with its own terms in 2003, the EU increased its attention towards Moldova and adopted policies and initiatives to reform the political and economic structures and at the same time prevent and transform the conflict. According to the EU's strategic objective to create "a ring of well-governed countries" and Moldova's increased proximity to the union after 2007 enlargement, the EU's Moldova policies have gained momentum. In 2003 Moldova was included in the ENP and in 2005 the EU-Moldova action plan was designed to lay out the objectives of further integration with the EU through developing and reforming Moldovan legislation, norms, standards, governance systems, economic policies, and trade related regulations. EUBAM is attempting to settle the conflict, monitor the border with Ukraine, prevent trafficking, illegal trade into Transnistria, and further integration with the EU.

These political developments positively impacted integration with the EU and economic relations with the union. In 2014, the EU implemented a set of Autonomous Trade Preferences that integrated Moldova into the Union and through their Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement in 2016. The Moldova-European Union Association Agreement (AA) signed in 2014 and effective since 2016, aims to develop political, economic, judicial, and financial standards and integrate Moldova into the EU. Through AA agreement Moldova was the first post-soviet country that gained visa free status to travel in the Union. As figure 1. shows these policies increased Moldova's exports to the EU and decreased its dependence on Russia. In 2019 in its fifth Association council meetings the EU and Moldova agreed to and reiterated the importance of judiciary reform, the visa-free regime, the fight against corruption and money laundering, cooperation in justice, freedom and security and further integration of Moldova into the EU.

⁴⁰ Kramer, B. 2020, November 16. **New York Times**, *Pro-E.U. Candidate Wins Moldova Election Over Putin-Backed Rival* Retrieved from. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/16/world/europe/moldova-election-president-sandu.html>.

Figure 1: The Change of Moldova’s Economic Relations



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.⁴¹

6. EUBAM: CONFLICT PREVENTION, CONFIDENCE BUILDING, AND PEACE BUILDING

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EUBAM is the EU’s most concrete step to prevent conflict and build confidence between Transnistria and Moldova. EUBAM monitors and supports Moldova and Ukraine border control, customs and trade norms, and practices to meet the EU standards. The mission aims, as stated on its webpage, to “contribute to the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict by supporting development of the Transnistria-related confidence-building measures and approximation of legalization and procedures in customs, trade, transport and trans-boundary management; ensure the full implementation of Integrated Border Management (IBM) practices at the Moldova-Ukraine border; assist Moldovan and Ukrainian authorities to combat cross-border crime more effectively.”⁴² The EUBAM has launched in 2005 and mandate of the mission have been extended five times in 2007, 2009, 2017, 2020.

The EUBAM has its headquarters in Odesa (Ukraine) with six offices in Moldova and Ukraine. It monitors 67 border crossing points between Moldovan-Ukrainian, 25 of which are located on the Transnistrian part of the border. The mission monitors the 453 km-long Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukraine border as well as

⁴¹ National Bureau of Statistics of the rePublic of Moldova, Retrieved November 02, 2020 <https://statistica.gov.md/category.php?l=en&idc=336>.

⁴² EUBAM, “What we Do?” Retrieved December 03, 2020, <https://eubam.org/what-we-do/>

411km-long Moldova administrative boundary line within the Republic of Moldova. The EUBAM mission is to “observe custom clearance and border guard checks; to examine border control documents and records; provide assistance in preventing smuggling of persons and goods; re-examination and re-assessment of any consignment of processed goods; make unannounced visits to any locations on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, including border units, custom posts, office of transits, inland police stations.”⁴³

EUBAM’s report for 2005-2010 clearly states the mission contribution to prevent conflict and the integration of Transnistria with Moldova, regulate Transnistrian trade and ensure a single customs regime in Moldova.⁴⁴ The mission also was successful in helping to demarcate the border between Ukraine and Moldova and the restoration of transport corridors from Transnistria. Moreover, Transnistria’s economic and trade integration with Moldova contributed its trade development with the EU and became the main market to export goods replacing Russia. However, Russia is still main partner of the Transnistria and although its ruling elites have become more pluralistic since 2010s. However, report states that almost all members of Transnistria’s political establishment share objective of independence and international recognition.⁴⁵

EUBAM contributes to and advocates for confidence-building measures between Chisinau and Tiraspol. It advocated the opening of international transport between Ukraine and Moldova that passes through Transnistria. It succeeded in the opening of a passenger rail link between Chisinau and Odessa through Transnistria that positively impacted people-to-people contacts and reduced delays and controls of the passengers which positively increased commuters of the rail links. Opening of these rail links were a positive step to build confidence between people in the region.⁴⁶

⁴³ EUBAM, “**Who we Are?**” Retrieved December 04, 2020, from <http://eubam.org/who-we-are/>

⁴⁴ Dias, Vanda Amaro. "The EU's post-liberal approach to peace: framing EUBAM's contribution to the Moldova–Transnistria conflict transformation." *European Security* 22, no. 3, 2013, 338-354.

⁴⁵ Montesano, Francesco Saverio, Tony van der Togt, and Wouter Zweers. *The Europeanisation of Moldova: is the EU on the right track?*. Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2016.

⁴⁶ EUBAM, “**What we Do?**” Retrieved December 03, 2020, <http://eubam.org/what-we-do/conflict-resolution/>

Despite its drawbacks EUBAM is a positive step to prevent conflict eruption, trafficking, smuggling of goods and illegal trades. Transnistria accepted its products exported with Moldova's stamps and its economic ties with the EU have developed through Moldova. One of the drawbacks of EUBAM is its limitation to working within the Transnistrian territory. It has not held any executive positions and can only give recommendations to the Ukrainian and Moldovan authorities. Its activities consist essentially in training Ukrainian and Moldovan authorities, monitoring checkpoints, and making unannounced visits.

Despite its observer status it has contributed to the prevention of the conflict and transforming it and building confidence, particularly at checkpoints. The EUBAM mission prevents trafficking, smuggling persons and illegal goods. It contributed Tiraspol recognition to Chisinau and Moldovan stamps on goods that were produced in Transnistria. Considering that losing economic privileges that Russian people possessed in the region were main factors of the conflict, Moldova's integration with the EU and recognizing minorities rights with a pluralist political system could help to build sustainable peace in the region.

Concluding Remarks

The Moldova Transnistria conflict emerged following dissolution of the USSR. However, as Russia retreated from the region the EU did not attempt to prevent the eruption of conflict and did not have any policies towards the region in the 1990s. The Moldova-Transnistria conflict has remained unresolved. Following the EU's enlargement to post-communist geography Moldova become neighbor of the EU. Having a de-facto state like Transnistria and a lack of security in the region was assessed as a security threat for the EU.

Beginning in the 2000s the EU adopted several policies and initiatives to transform the conflict and integrate Moldova and Transnistria into the EU space and increase its rule of norms and governance, economic and judicial systems. Moldova gained visa free status and DCFTA as a result it has reformed its institutions. EUBAM as one of these initiatives contributed border patrolling and monitoring to the transit of goods and trades between Ukraine and Moldova that passed through Transnistria which not

controlled by Moldova. Transnistria recognized Moldova's authority on the border in return for economic relations with the EU and funds from the union that supported economic, social, and civil-society projects that could contribute to sustainable development of the region. Acknowledging Moldova stamped goods produced in Transnistria opened the doors the EU market for the region and its exports to the EU surpassed exports to Russia.

Despite these contributions the EUBAM has no executive power, and its mission is restricted to monitoring and recommendation status. It has been successful in fifteen years to prevent conflict and build relations between two parties. However, it would be more effective if the EU gave further assistance and increased the EUBAM's activities within Transnistria to control illegal market smuggling of food, cigarettes, and construction materials.⁴⁷ As it has been discussed the main reason for the conflict was the minorities lack of welfare in the region because ruling elites do not want to lose their economic and political privileges. The EU could help Moldova to adopt inclusive policies respecting ethnic differences and economic integration of the region with the EU through Moldova. Moldova itself is in political turmoil and corruption is a major problem that prevents development of the country. Increasing economic and political support to pro-Western parties in Moldova and promising more attractive rewards in return of reforms could accelerate political transformation of the Moldova and parallel transformation of perceptions in Transnistria.

The Moldova-Transnistria conflict could be a successful case for the EU because it prevented the eruption of the conflict in the post-soviet region that emerged following dissolution of the USSR. Transforming the conflict and building peace could be a precedent for the other conflicts that remain unresolved in the region. To achieve this the EU needs to further its engagement with the region and develop country and conflict specific initiatives and apply its historical experiences in the regional conflicts.

⁴⁷ Dias, Vanda Amaro. "The EU's post-liberal approach to peace: framing EUBAM's contribution to the Moldova–Transnistria conflict transformation."

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