

Forum: General Assembly 1 (GA1)

Issue: The Situation in Transnistria

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Introduction

Transnistria is a breakaway region of Moldova, bordering Ukraine. Transnistria remains under PMR (Program Management Review) control with approximately 1,500 Russian troops stationed as peacekeepers. Moldova aims to reassert control and integrate the breakaway region. The region's political status remains unresolved. Transnistria encompasses the development of the territory east of the Dniester River, a multi-ethnic borderland absorbed into the Russian Empire by the late 18th century and later shaped by Soviet policies that industrialized the region and altered its demographic composition through Russian and Ukrainian immigration. The situation draws concern from both regional and global powers. The European Union remains committed to Moldova's sovereignty. While Russia supports the region's independence claims.

Definition of Key Terms

Transnistria

A breakaway region internationally recognized as part of Moldova that has operated with de facto independence since the early 1990s.

Moldova

The internationally recognized state to which Transnistria legally belongs.

De Facto State

A territory that governs itself in practice but lacks broad international recognition as an independent country.

De Jure

Refers to something recognised as legally or officially valid.

Separatism

A movement seeking political separation or greater autonomy for a particular territory or population.

Ceasefire

An agreement to stop fighting, either temporarily or indefinitely.

Reintegration

The process of bringing Transnistria back under Moldova's effective political and administrative control.

Mediation

Intervention by a third to help opposing sides negotiate a peaceful solution.

Guarantor

A state or organisation that helps support or guarantee the implementation of an agreement.

Geopolitical Leverage

The ability of a state to use its political, economic, military or strategic position to influence another state.

Background Information

Historical Background

The roots of the situation can be found in the final years of the Soviet Union. During this time, Moldova was becoming increasingly independent from the Soviets, while disagreements began to spark about culture, language, national identity and Moldova's future geopolitical relationship with the Soviet Union. In 1990, governing bodies in Transnistria declared independence from Moldova, although this was not recognised internationally. After Moldova declared independence in 1991, tensions between the Moldovan government and Transnistria's leaders grew and eventually led to a deep armed conflict.

The most devastating fighting took place in 1992, particularly around the city of Bender. Hundreds of people were killed and displaced from their homes. A ceasefire was agreed on in July 1992, bringing an end to the majority of the fighting. The agreement established a security buffer between the two sides and created a Joint Control Commission to monitor the situation. The ceasefire has been held mostly since up until the present day, and there has been no return to large-scale armed conflict between Moldova and Transnistria since then.

Key Perspectives

Russia's involvement in the situation remains one of the key factors for why it is still a present situation today. Russian troops have remained in Transnistria since the conflict first broke out, with Russia describing their troops present as connecting to regional security. Moldova, however, has repeatedly called for the removal of these Russian troops, arguing that their presence severely violates Moldova's national security and sovereignty. These widely different perspectives of the situation have been one of the reasons the security aspect of this issue has been hard to resolve.

International organisations around the world have tried to encourage negotiations between the two sides. The main diplomatic aim has been to bring Moldova and Transnistria together on terms which both can settle on. In these talks Russia and Ukraine have acted as mediators with the European Union (EU) and The United States of America acted as observers. Discussions have included issues such as freedom of movement, economic partnership and the rights of both sets of people across the Dniester River.

Current Concerns

The wider security situation has also added to the difficulty of finding a peaceful solution to this conflict. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought the spotlight back on Transnistria due to its border with Ukraine and its relationship with Russia. Moldova has also slowly moved towards the EU, which has changed its political and economic direction. However, these additional developments have created additional questions about the current state of regional security, although Transnistria has remained mostly peaceful since the ceasefire in 1992.

At present there is no long-term political solution to this issue. Moldova supports the preservation of its territorial integrity, while providing Transnistria with a special status within the country. The different positions of Moldova, Transnistria, Russia and other international influences have therefore made negotiations difficult. Finding a lasting solution will require continued diplomatic engagement, while also considering security, economic and political concerns regarding the people still living in the region.

Organisations and Major Countries Involved

OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe)

One of the most important organisations in this issue as it has facilitated negotiations between Moldova and Transnistria, it monitors the Security Buffer between the two and is aiming to achieve a political settlement.

EU (European Union)

Supports Moldova economically and supports their territorial integrity while supporting a peaceful settlement. They would not be in favour of Russia having a strong presence in that area as it could be a threat to European national security.

Russian Federation

Maintains military forces in the region and has major political and economic influence there. Seeks transnistrian independence or even merging with itself.

Government of Moldova

Aims for reintegration of Transnistria while maintaining their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Transnistrian authorities (Tiraspol)

Are the de-facto authorities which control the region and support the Russian troops occupying the region.

Possible Solutions

Possible solutions include a negotiated reintegration into Moldova which would help preserve Moldova's territorial integrity while giving Transnistrians protection. This could include guarantees for political representation, human rights and local decision-making.

Another solution could be giving Transnistria a special autonomous status, which would mean that Transnistria would remain part of Moldova but would receive significant political and economic autonomy. This could allow Transnistria to manage areas such as education, culture and local government while remaining part of Moldova.

Reducing military presence and creating an internationally monitored security arrangement would also significantly reduce the risk of the conflict becoming violent again. This could include international observers and agreements to gradually reduce military forces.

Finally, increasing the economic ties between Transnistria and Moldova would provide development support and strong incentives for cooperation and could be built on existing diplomatic frameworks. This could include increasing trade, improving infrastructure and supporting businesses.

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