

**Trafficking in Transnistria:
The Role of Russia**

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SIS Honors Capstone

Supervised by

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**Submitted to the
School of International Service
American University**

**In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for graduation with
General University Honors
Bachelor of Arts Degree**

May 2009

Abstract

After declaring *de facto* independence from the Republic of Moldova in 1992, the breakaway region of Transnistria became increasingly isolated, and has emerged as a hotspot for weapons and human trafficking. Working from a Realist paradigm, this project assesses the extent to which the Russian government and military abet trafficking in Transnistria, and the way in which Russia uses trafficking as a means to adversely affect Moldova's designs of broader integration within European spheres. This project proves necessary because the existing scholarship on the topic of Transnistrian trafficking failed to focus on the role of the Russian government and military, and in turn did not account for the ways in which trafficking hinders Moldova's national interests. The research project utilizes sources such as trafficking policy centers, first-hand accounts, trade agreements, non-governmental organizations, and government documents. A review of the literature employs the use of secondary sources such as scholarly and newspaper articles. In short, this project develops a more comprehensive understanding of Russia's role in Moldovan affairs and attempts to add a significant work to the existing literature.

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Trafficking in Transnistria: Research Agenda

Following a brief and bloody civil war that ended in June of 1992, the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova suffered a major blow. With the support of the Russian military, the breakaway region of Transnistria declared *de facto* independence from Moldova in 1990, and in turn, trod down a path of increased isolation and seclusion that put the territory at odds with an increasingly integrated Europe. In the eighteen years since declaring independence, the Dnestr Moldovan Republic (Transnistria) has maintained a large degree of self-governance from the Republic of Moldova as a result of continued Russian military presence in the territory. During this same period, however, Transnistria has become infamous as a major transit point for the illicit distribution of weapons and human beings. This raises two important questions: to what extent does the Russian government and military abet the current Transnistrian administration in the realms of weapons and human trafficking, and why is trafficking used as a mechanism to adversely affect Moldova's designs of broader integration within European and Western spheres of influence?

Due to Russia's reemergence as a powerful player in the global community, the issue of Russian interference in Transnistria has become increasingly important. The so-called "West" considers Russia's continued presence in Transnistria a threat to both diplomatic and economic relations. Due to the fact that the Kremlin currently controls many strategic oil and gas pipelines throughout the entirety of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region, and because Moscow presently supports several breakaway territories in the same areas, the European Union and the United States are keen to facilitate secure and stable relations in those territories. As a result, the issue of trafficking in Transnistria proves relevant in a global perspective because of its impact on stability.

As Soviet troops slowly withdrew from the satellite republics in Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, they often left weaponry behind as a way to preserve at least some semblance of authority over their former domains. Transnistria, which maintained a substantial ethnic Russian population because of historical ties to the powerful state, essentially became a dumping ground for the Soviet Union's leftover stockpiles of weaponry and armaments. By introducing large numbers of weapons into the region, the Russian government could effectively place a check on Moldovan designs of reunification with the Transnistrian Republic while also providing armed support to the breakaway region that it so adamantly supported following the Moldovan civil war. Furthermore, due to the fact that the state of the Transnistrian economy continued to weaken during the years following the declaration of independence, the republic emerged as a prime spot for trafficking and smuggling to rogue states and individuals who were bent on obtaining weapons, sex, or other various commodities at discount prices.

In order to fully comprehend the aforementioned practices and events that take place in Transnistria in the sphere of trafficking, one must examine existing reports from scholars, news agencies, and various other sources. At present, much of the contemporary literature on the subject analyzes the trafficking process in an attempt to understand how it potentially affects reunification with Moldova. Other scholars focus solely on the issue of how Transnistrian trafficking alters stability in Southeast Europe. Additionally, some have researched the Russian presence in Transnistria and, in turn, have attempted to shed light upon the way in which the Russian government and military contribute to a destabilization of relations with Moldova and neighboring states. However, the literature largely fails to elaborate on the extent of Russia's involvement in the trafficking process, and does not efficiently discuss the degree to which the Transnistrian government is under Moscow's control. This paper will attempt to qualitatively

address the extent to which the Russian government and military intervenes in Transnistrian trafficking affairs, and will then endeavor to explain the significance of Russia's involvement in relation to the stability of Southeast Europe and Moldova. This analysis will help determine the way in which Russia's actions negatively affect Moldova's desire for increased integration within European and Western spheres of influence.

In terms of International Relations theory, this paper will assess the aforementioned conflict in the context of a Realist perspective. Clearly, research that analyzes the current security situation and the balance of power in Southeast Europe has its foundations in the Realist paradigm. In order to determine the role of the Russian government and military within the Dnestr Moldovan Republic, one must examine relations within a framework built around the ideas of state (or pseudo-state) actors, war, diplomacy, security, and balance of power. This context will also prove useful because of the fact that much of the preexisting literature derives from a similar Realist perspective. The analysis will also attempt to provide evidence that the Realist paradigm remains relevant in the post-Cold War era in which many scholars have questioned its continued validity.

Due to the increasing significance of maintaining stability and a balance of power in the whole of Southeast Europe, the study of potential Russian association with Transnistrian traffickers and officials will prove extremely valuable. With the foundations established thus far, this paper will present extensive explorations into the issues of trafficking in Transnistria, potential Russian involvement in weapons and human trafficking in the territory, and the way in which Moscow may use such practices to facilitate changes in stability and the existing balance of power in Southeast Europe. In turn, the research presented will hopefully provide significant

insights into the important role that Russia's involvement in the region plays in the context of Moldovan aims of beginning a broader cooperation with other European states.

My research will first examine the existing scholarship on Russia's involvement in the Transnistrian territory and the trafficking practices within the breakaway republic. This section of the research will specifically attempt to shed light on the actions of the Kremlin and the Russian 14th Army in decisions regarding Transnistria, while also attempting to learn more about the intricacies of arms and human trafficking there. In turn, it will interpret the scholarly literature in a Realist context in order to demonstrate that the theoretical framework pertains to this particular situation and that Realism continues to remain applicable in a post-Cold War world. This will also prove particularly important, largely because many scholars have declared Realism a flawed paradigm following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Next, the process of gathering primary and secondary research will continue, so that we can understand more about potential links between the Russian government and military and the Transnistrian weapons and human traffickers. This information will then be used to analyze and assess the current conditions of stability and security within the territory and Southeast Europe as a whole. It is hoped that the proposal will subsequently apply all of the aforementioned research to include broader parameters. For instance, I will examine the way in which Russia's involvement in Transnistria affects Moldova's intentions for increased cooperation with European states. Essentially, this research should prove valuable by adding a significant work to the existing scholarship about the region. Finally, in the conclusion, the proposal will endeavor to successfully answer the question of the extent of Russian involvement in Transnistrian trafficking practices, and perhaps provide considerable insight into the ways in which the region of Southeast Europe and the Moldovan state are affected by such actions.

Literature Review: Realist, Liberal, and Competitive Politics Theories

In the sixteen years that have followed the Moldovan civil war, many scholars have written from various view points on the issue of trafficking in the Transnistrian breakaway region. Much of this scholarship has sought to investigate the role of individuals in the trafficking process, but has managed to omit questions regarding the extent to which Russia aids the Transnistrian government in that realm. In addition, the literature has steered clear of providing insight into the way in which the current balance of power has changed (or is currently evolving) as a result of the trafficking problem.

The scholarship regarding the Transnistrian conflict and the issue of Russian interference in the domestic affairs of the Moldovan Republic can be divided into three basic analytical schools of thought within the context of International Relations. The most prevalent and useful paradigm in terms of assessing the current situation is the Realist school of thought because most of the existing literature on trafficking in Transnistria is already rooted in the Realist archetype. Additionally, most analyses are best placed within the Realist framework because the contemporary state of affairs in the region deals with state actors, a war, and a shifting balance of power. Several authors, however, chose to examine the conditions from a Liberal perspective. Another author, somewhat interestingly, scrutinized the current balance of power from an outlook which she refers to as the “Competitive Politics” theory. The debate between the Realist and Liberal viewpoints proves the most intriguing, but the Competitive Politics paradigm also deserves further scrutiny.

The Liberal argument, though somewhat prevalent in the realms of scholarship on the topic, proves fairly ineffective in its analysis of the current balance of power in the region. It is important to note that, just as the Realist perspective, the Liberal argument proves moderately

accurate in assessing the trafficking process in Transnistria. With that said, however, the Liberal authors fall short in terms of expanding the facts into a broader, more comprehensive interpretation. Authors such as Felix Buttin, for example, attempt to analyze the trafficking debate on a human level. He claims to assess the Transnistrian conflict within a sub-category of Liberalism that he refers to as the concept of “Human Security.”¹ Through this process, Buttin successfully discusses the way in which the Transnistrian authorities hold little regard for individuals living within their system. Simply put, the administration in the breakaway region mirrors that of the old Soviet Union in the sense that those in the political hierarchy seek to cultivate absolute power at the expense of the people within the *de facto* independent territory. It is correctly argued that due to the government’s lack of compassion for the individual within the territory, great injustices occur.

Nicolae Popescu, in an article written in 2006, analyzes the way in which he believes the EU should interact with Moldova and Transnistria to alleviate security concerns brought about because of trafficking.² This article, just as Buttin’s, effectively assesses the human struggle within the region. Through his discussion of the EU-Moldovan relationship, Popescu cites the need for diplomacy through the help of non-governmental organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). While it is true that the OSCE plays an important role in maintaining stability in the entirety of Europe, the author neglects to take into account the need for greater pressure on state-actors to place demands on the Transnistrian authorities. Popescu does mention the need for a dialogue between the EU, Ukraine, and Moldova, but falls short in addressing the most powerful actor in the region, Russia. With a clear

¹ Felix Buttin, "A Human Security Perspective on Transnistria: Reassessing the Situation Within the ‘Black Hole of Europe’," *Human Security Journal* 3 (2007), 14.

² Nicolae Popescu, "The EU and Transnistria," *UNISCI Discussion Papers* (2006), 1-7.

link established between Russia and Transnistria, one cannot promote a progressive and realistic dialogue that lacks a Russian presence.

The arguments put forth by these two Liberal authors demonstrate the way in which there is a need for deeper examination of the situation within the Liberal paradigm. As mentioned, the authors make important and valid points about the roles of individuals and NGOs in their assessment of the trafficking process and the Transnistrian conflict. They do not, however, fully introduce the broad role that Russia plays in those realms. Due to the fact that Russia is the largest and most powerful state with influence in the region, it is essential that the literature addresses the actions of the Russian state. Merely mentioning that Russia plays an important part in the matters at hand is not remotely sufficient. Thus, the literature of the Liberal paradigm misses the mark due to an omission of the role of states, militaries, and greater security concerns in analyzing trafficking and the balance of power within the region.

Another paradigm that deserves evaluation is that of Competitive Politics. As this theoretical framework is fairly unknown, one must learn more about its basic tenets of thought. This theory describes foreign policy as a byproduct of competition for domestic office by the political leaders of a given state. According to the doctrine of this theory, politicians can win elections or remain in an office by going to the public and bargaining something of value to their constituents. In turn, by offering some sort of material benefits to their voters, the public will (re)commit their allegiance to a particular candidate. In terms of foreign policy, then, the politicians must offer a distinct vision of the domestic social order and accompany that with a grand international strategy. That is to say that the foreign policy decisions of politicians are based on previous domestic policy positions.

Kate Litvak, the Competitive Politics scholar writing about Russian policy toward Transnistria, investigates the way in which Russian domestic concerns shape their foreign policy toward the breakaway region. For instance, she mentions that many actors in the new Russian regime supported Moldovan independence in 1990 because of their “Atlanticist views.” This term refers to a philosophy that promoted cooperation between European and North American states in the realms of defense, politics, and economics. Atlanticism promoted stability through democratic institutions and the rule of law. Though the Atlanticist movement had existed for many years in the so-called “West,” the philosophy largely began to gain favor in Russia during the years preceding and immediately following the fall of the Soviet Union.

After several years of economic struggle and decreasing popularity within Russia, however, the same Atlanticists who had supported Moldova’s push toward Europe began to promote greater unity among former Soviet states.³ Obviously, it seems that they felt that power should derive from the central forces in Moscow rather than places such as Brussels or Washington. Litvak proves astute in her assessment that Russian actions sought only to enhance Russian power in their own state and nearby regions. Therefore, the Competitive Politics paradigm holds some validity and accuracy in terms of assessing Russian actions and stability issues. Litvak fails, however, to address the new balance of power created within the region. She also omits an analysis of the way in which Russia uses its power to keep Moldova from realizing its aims of enhanced integration with Europe. Another major weakness emerges because she stops short of analyzing Romanian, Ukrainian, and European Union concerns in regards to the trafficking issues in Transnistria. This research paper will address those concerns of the

³ Kate Litvak, "The Role of Political Competition and Bargaining in Russian Foreign Policy: The Case of Russian Policy Toward Moldova," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29, no. 2 (1996), 215-217.

bordering states in a broader scope that will also investigate changes in the current balance of power in the region of Southeast Europe.

Whereas the Liberal and Competitive Politics archetypes steer clear of scrutinizing the subject of Transnistrian trafficking and Russia's possible involvement from a broader, state-centered approach, the Realist school seeks to demonstrate that states, militaries, and security concerns are actually at the heart of the matter. As a result, the Realist approach proves most relevant in studying the trafficking issues in Transnistria. This paper will aim to apply the information in a way that will shed light on the broader balance of power within region of Southeast Europe.

The Realist authors on this subject provide significant insight into the history of power struggles and relations within the region. Alex Kliment, for example, explains in great depth the way in which the Transnistrian conflict and subsequent trafficking practices came about as a result of states struggling for influence over the region.⁴ Moldova and Transnistria have both been coveted throughout the years by Russia, Romania, and to a lesser extent, Ukraine. The states battling for supremacy in the region have essentially shaped Moldovan and Transnistrian affairs as they exist today. It should come as no surprise, then, that states have used war as a means to shift the balance of power in their favor.

Another author, Wade Boese, describes the way in which the Russian presence in Transnistria has enabled the trafficking process to flourish.⁵ Due to the presence of the Russian 14th Army, Transnistria is able to sustain territorial integrity. Additionally, whether or not they are involved in the actual dealings of arms or humans, it is argued that the Russian presence in

⁴ Alex Kliment, "The Transnistrian Dilemma," *SAIS Review* 25, no. 1, (2005): 71-74.

⁵ Wade Boese, "Russian Withdrawal from Moldova, Georgia Lags," *Arms Control Today* 33, no. 10 (2003), 43.

the breakaway republic facilitates a culture of rogue politics and corruption because of the fact that they essentially serve as a crutch for the current Transnistrian regime.

Stephen Blank, another author who wrote about stability and security in the regions surrounding the Black Sea, believes that Russia deliberately “obstructs” progress toward conflict resolution in Transnistria. He argues that Russia hopes to stymie the building of a larger European order with roots in peace and security. Additionally, Russia wants to deny Moldovan access to alliances such as NATO and the EU, because it would shift the current balance of power in the area.⁶ This article, possibly more efficiently than any other, looks specifically at the questions of stability and security in Southeast Europe. Throughout the analysis, however, Blank mentions trafficking only once in passing. Having already established that the illicit trade of weapons and peoples creates significant problems for prolonged stability, it seems Blank’s argument is missing an important piece to the larger puzzle.

Perhaps most telling about the struggle for supremacy in Southeast Europe, Chloe Bruce describes the way in which the Russian government uses state-owned gas and energy companies to manipulate or influence other governments and conflicts.⁷ During the Soviet period, Transnistria was the industrial heart of the Moldovan SSR. The territory supplied nearly 90% of Moldovan electricity. After the civil war, arrangements were made so that it continued to supply the Moldovan Republic with gas and energy. Russian state-owned energy companies soon bought out the Transnistrian companies, and when the Moldovan Republic failed to pay large portions of their bills, the companies cut off supplies. This demonstrates the way in which the

⁶ Blank, Stephen. "Russia and the Black Sea's Frozen Conflicts in Strategic Perspective." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (2008): 24.

⁷ Chloe Bruce, "Power Resources: The Political Agenda in Russo-Moldovan Gas Relations," *Problems of Post-Communism* 54, no. 3 (2007), 29-47.

largest state in the region, Russia, uses alternative means to attempt to shift the current balance of power in Southeast Europe and Moldova.

While these four Realist scholars provide the greatest insight into power relations within the region, they all fall just short of assessing the entire situation. Kliment and Boese discuss Russian involvement in the trafficking process, but do not elaborate on the extent to which Russia controls the trafficking that occurs. The four Realist authors manage to analyze Russian involvement to a greater extent than the authors of alternative paradigms, but still neglect to scrutinize how Russian involvement challenges the broader balance of power in Southeast Europe.

This paper will continue to assess the trafficking situation in Transnistria from a Realist perspective because it is the most useful theory in terms of understanding the current balance of power. It will serve to expand on the current literature in an attempt to explain the extent to which Russia aids the Transnistrian government in the realms of human and weapons trafficking. The greater aim, however, will be to examine Russia's involvement in Transnistrian affairs, and in turn, analyze what that information explains about the current balance of power within the region of Southeast Europe.

Research Design

Over a decade-and-a-half after the conclusion of the Moldovan civil war, a war in which the region of Transnistria declared *de facto* independence, many issues continue to plague the breakaway republic and the region as a whole. Within that context, it will be my purpose to extensively research and analyze the extent to which the Russian government abets the practices of weapons and human trafficking within Transnistria. The information gathered will subsequently be examined in an attempt to determine how Russia's influence adversely affects

Moldova's designs of greater integration within European and other Western spheres. Through an analysis of Russian dominance in the region, one can better understand how trafficking is used as yet another means through which the powerful Russian state can control smaller, developing states.

To fully analyze the Transnistrian dilemma, one must first understand the terms and concepts presented in the original research proposal. Therefore, the most important term to define is "Realism." For the purposes of this paper, Realism shall be defined in terms presented by Hans Morgenthau in his article entitled "Realism in International Politics." Within this text, Morgenthau describes an international system in which states are the most important actors in relations, and the most pressing issues for states to address is survival. In his assessment, Morgenthau believes that the international arrangement is often one of polarity, in which states must "bend every effort to maintain a balance of power."⁸ Economic developments are also important to national interests, he believes. In Realist theory, human nature drives states to act in this self-serving manner. Additionally, and importantly to the Transnistrian issue, states are the dominant actors in international relations because they possess the military capability to tear one another down.⁹ This paper shall apply the realist paradigm because of its focus on states, war and security, economic interests, and balance of power.

An issue that arises as a result of using the Realist paradigm is that Transnistria maintains a somewhat undefined status. While the republic has yet to be officially recognized as a state by any world powers, it functions as a typical state and maintains most qualities of a defined state. For instance, the Dnestr Moldovan Republic functions with a sustainable government and holds elections every five years (the outcomes of the elections are admittedly disputable). Additionally,

⁸ Hans Morgenthau, "Realism in International Politics." *Naval War College Review* 51 (1998): 18.

⁹ Morgenthau, 16-26.

the Transnistrian government maintains a military, circulates a Transnistrian currency, creates passports, and runs the regional postal service. Perhaps most importantly, the authorities of the breakaway region preserve territorial integrity by controlling their own border crossings and customs checkpoints. While the territorial integrity of Transnistria has never been officially recognized by any state and only receives support from Russia, it is important to note that Transnistria is sovereign in the sense that it is a self-governing, *de facto* independent region. Examining these aspects of the Transnistrian apparatus demonstrate why, for the purposes of this paper, the breakaway region essentially functions as a state. By defining Transnistria as a state, one can also effectively apply the Realist paradigm to any analysis of the breakaway region.

Two additional terms require definition. Firstly, the term “Russian government and military” in the research question refers to the Kremlin, Duma, and Russia’s 14th Army. Specifically, this paper will study policy directives made by the Kremlin or Duma that relate expressly to the Russian 14th Army, which continues to ensure Transnistria’s sovereignty and existence.¹⁰ Next, the term “trafficking” takes on the definition set forth by the European Commission’s Glossary of Justice and Home Affairs. This classification states that trafficking is “the unlawful movement of drugs, people, or black market goods.”¹¹ Clearly, this definition encompasses the realms of weapons and human trafficking in Transnistria.

Having defined the essential terminology, it is now important to outline the analytical studies that will follow. The first study will examine the way in which Russia’s influence affects Moldova’s aims of broader cooperation with European and other Western states. It will be important to study how Russia uses Transnistria to essentially keep Moldova within its sphere of influence. To effectively assess this, I will look at specific documents and agreements. Analyzing

¹⁰ Wanda Dressler, "Between Empires and Europe: The Tragic Fate of Moldova." *Diogenes* 53, no. 2 (2006): 46.

¹¹ "Justice and Home Affairs - Glossary." *European Union – European Commission*. 2008.
http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/glossary/glossary_welcome_en.htm (accessed Oct 7, 2008).

trade agreements made between Moldova and other states is one aspect that will prove extremely important. Within trade agreements, I will be looking explicitly at the countries involved and the amount and type of trade conducted with each. Trade agreements are one mechanism that will reveal the direction in which the Moldovan government feels it must align itself economically. Additionally, an analysis of Moldova's EU and NATO negotiations and Russia's response to those discussions will demonstrate the way in which Russia looks to expand (or maintain) influence over Moldova. Specifically, this research is going to assess Russia's rhetoric qualitatively, while also examining military measures (such as the building of new missile defense systems) to understand more about the Kremlin's role in Moldova.

Another important aspect of the first analytical study will be to scrutinize the use of Russian state-owned natural gas as a tool for exploitation.¹² Due to the fact that Transnistria was (and remains) the industrial heart of Moldova, the strained relations between Moldova and Transnistria presents a large problem. Russian state-owned gas companies now own roughly 90% of the energy and gas assets in Transnistria. This study will examine the way in which Russian companies use natural gas and energy to exert dominance over Moldova. Specifically, I will examine the companies' responses to Moldovan attempts to shift allegiances within the European sphere of influence. For example, I will analyze decisions made by the Moldovan government regarding EU or NATO cooperation, and the subsequent turning-off of gas and energy by Russian state-owned gas companies. This qualitative analysis will demonstrate another means through which Moldova finds itself between two powerful actors. Altogether, this first analytical study will incorporate these examinations to demonstrate the ways in which Russia's pressure on Moldova effectively keeps the small state within the Russian sphere of influence.

¹² Bruce, 29-47.

The second analytical study is designed to examine the Russian presence in Transnistria and Moldova, and the events transpiring at old Soviet weapons stockpiles and border crossings, where—it has been reported—the Russian 14th army tends to harass outsiders while enabling corruption.¹³ The study will look at the actions of the Russian military, Russian organized crime, and Russian state-owned firms to determine the extent to which Russia is involved in the trafficking of arms and peoples in Transnistria and Moldova. This analytical study will first use existing data from several sources. Information from the CIA databases and The World Bank give details about trafficking and issues with stability in the region. In addition, organizations focused on transnational crime and corruption also maintain extremely valuable information and data, and are easily accessible through the internet. I will use these three resources for data regarding the types of weapons being smuggled, and the reasons for human trafficking. Also, these institutions provide facts about the states where trafficked commodities are sold. I will analyze the destinations, examining the types of states to which goods are trafficked.

Additionally, two important reports were run by the British and French news sources on trafficking in Transnistria. In these reports, the investigators attempted to work their way into the trafficking apparatus with a large degree of success. The data presented in these works will be used to create a more thorough understanding of the types of weapons and people being trafficked, and the purposes of trafficking. All of these sources will prove informative, but more information is necessary regarding Russia's potential involvement in Transnistrian and Moldovan trafficking.

The second analytical study will also collect data from expert eyewitnesses who have traveled through Transnistrian border crossings. These eyewitness accounts, which will be obtained largely through first-hand accounts in books, will hopefully shed additional light onto

¹³ *Trafficking Arms On Europe's Doorstep*. Cutting Edge. Canal, Paris. 01 Aug 2006.

the practices of the Russian 14th army stationed on and around border zones. This data will be qualitative in nature, and will build upon the aforementioned data. These books will provide view points from members of the Moldovan, Ukrainian, and Transnistrian population. Also, several Moldovan and Ukrainian NGO's, such as LaStrada and the Moldova Foundation, have expertise on issues such as trafficking, especially in the human trafficking realm. These resources will offer a greater amount of information than simply compiling facts about statistical data, and will allow for a more thorough analysis of Russia's role in trafficking affairs in Transnistria.

By contacting and obtaining the findings of various organizations, it is hoped that a snowball effect will occur, and that, in turn, the data collected will enable this study to have a larger sample of sources. The vast amount of books written on trafficking in the region will provide a great amount of insight into the inner workings of the system. This should prove sufficient in studying the way in which the Russian government and military potentially aid and abet the trafficking practices in Transnistria.

This second analytical study will present information that will provide greater insight into Russia's handling of their left-over weaponry, and the way in which the soldiers interact with Transnistrian traffickers. Examining this case will provide empirical information regarding the extent to which the Russian government and military abet the Transnistrian authorities in the realms of trafficking.

After scrutinizing the two aforementioned analytical studies, commonalities between the trafficking practices and other exertions of power by Russia will be assessed. Through an analysis of Russian dominance in the region, one can better understand how trafficking is yet another means through which the powerful Russian state attempts to control smaller states.

Specifically, I will look for common elements articulated in government policies, and will examine the way in which the Russian military is potentially involved in various forms of manipulation within Transnistria. Finding commonalities should reveal the way in which the Russian government and army potentially use trafficking as a means of preventing Moldova from realizing aims of a broader cooperation with Europe and the West.

The above research design provides a comprehensive definition of terms. It also examines the information that I plan to study in order to provide greater understanding of Russia's involvement in trafficking, and what that involvement explains about Russia's influence in Moldova's policy initiatives. This empirical qualitative approach will allow for the most accurate portrait of the current situation, and in turn, add an important perspective to the existing International Relations theory and literature regarding this region and the Transnistrian conflict.

First Analytical Study: Known Mechanisms of Russian Influence in Moldova

This first study has been designed to examine the way in which Russia's influence affects Moldova's aims of increased cooperation and integration with European and other Western states. It will be important to study the way in which Russia uses its economic and political power to essentially keep Moldova within its sphere of influence. By analyzing these aspects of Russian influence, it will become easier to assess the ways in which Russia utilizes the volatile Transnistrian situation in order to manipulate Moldovan policy decisions. After scrutinizing the aforementioned analytical study, commonalities between the trafficking practices (discussed in the second analytical study) and other exertions of power by Russia (analyzed in this study) will be assessed. Through an analysis of Russian dominance in the region, one can better understand how trafficking is yet another means through which the powerful Russian state attempts to control smaller states.

This study will begin with an analysis of Moldovan trade negotiations and agreements, and will examine the way in which those agreements attempt to foster broader cooperation and integration with European spheres of influence. Within the context of this analysis will be a study of Russian reactions and responses to the trade agreements. It will prove important to examine both the rhetoric and actions emanating from Moscow. By looking at these governmental trade agreements, one can obtain a better understanding of the way in which state actors interact in the global arena. Additionally, one can better comprehend how economics are used to bolster and expand the domains of states and multinational organizations. This study, in turn, will prove vital in demonstrating that the Realist paradigm remains relevant in a post-Cold War era.

Next, the analytical study will scrutinize Moldova's political (non-economic) negotiations and cooperation with the European Union, and will then assess the way in which Russia reacts to such collaboration. Within this context, it will also prove important to study the way in which NATO expansion in the region is perceived as a serious threat by a wary Russian government. To understand the reasons why the Russian government wishes to keep Moldova within its sphere of influence, one must also understand Russia's aversion to European and "Western" expansion into neighboring states. This portion of the study will also prove important in bolstering the argument that Realism continues to act as a significant archetype today.

Another important aspect of any study of the Russian-Moldovan relationship is that of gas and energy politics. This portion of the analysis will contain information regarding the way in which Russia uses its state-owned natural gas companies as a tool for exerting dominance over Moldova. Specifically, this study will analyze decisions made by the Moldovan government, and

the subsequent turning-off of gas and energy supplies by Russian state-owned companies working in the Transnistrian separatist region.

Altogether, this first analytical study will incorporate all of these examinations to demonstrate the ways in which the pressure Russia exerts on Moldova effectively prohibits the small state the leaving the Russian sphere of influence. Looking at the aforementioned examples of Russian dominance will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the way in which Russia also uses trafficking as a means for maintaining a large amount of control over Moldova and the region as a whole. Examining the commonalities between trafficking and the methods analyzed in this study will illuminate patterns and trends in Russian policy decisions. In turn, these commonalities will demonstrate that trafficking presents an effective tool with which Russia can keep Moldova from looking to Europe for direction. It remains vital, even after the discontinuation of the Cold War, for Russia to preserve a balance of power with other influential states or entities (i.e. the United States and the European Union). As the influence of those competitive powers is felt more and more throughout the Eastern European region, Russia will continue to utilize all means available to maintain its influence. Thus, this analytical study will also demonstrate that the Realist paradigm—though many thought it to be a faded archetype after the fall of the USSR—remains useful today in many contexts as a theory for examining international relations.

Moldova's Economic Cooperation with Europe

Moldova sits in a precarious geographical location that straddles the regions of Central Europe, Southern Europe (including the Balkans), and Eastern Europe. While Central and Southern Europe have made significant headway in terms of integration into the European

Union, those states in far Eastern Europe still rely heavily on Russia to provide stability. This proves especially true in the areas of trade and economics.

While Moldova seems to be setting its sights on a somewhat broader cooperation with Europe, it cannot be denied that the state still depends heavily on Russian investment and trade as a source of growth and revenue. Indeed, the current communist government in Moldova has sought a path that reaches out toward Europe without shunning Russia. The Russian government, knowing that Moldova still depends on Russia to a large extent, often uses economic leverage to ensure that Moldova remains within its sphere of influence. Before delving into Russian interference in Moldovan economic realms, one should first assess the trade agreements signed by the Moldovan government with various parties.

In 2006, the Moldovan government met with heads of other states in Bucharest, Romania to sign on to the newly amended CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement).¹⁴ In affect, signing CEFTA meant that all of the states involved (Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina) hoped to increase trade not only amongst themselves, but also with the European Union, and it was stipulated that a free trade area be established in the area by 2010.¹⁵ This agreement is seen by many as a significant step to future membership within the European Union. Though many of these states have much work ahead of them before any thoughts of EU accession (none more so than Moldova), they hope that working together through free trade can bring them closer to the realization of such a goal. The fact that Moldova already maintains important associations with the EU (which will receive

¹⁴ Central European Free Trade Agreement, "Agreement on Amendment of and Accession to the Central European Free Trade Agreement," <http://www.stabilitypact.org/trade/...> (accessed January 21, 2009).

¹⁵ "Regional Trade Agreements in the ECE: CEFTA," May 19, 2008, http://ecetrade.typepad.com/rtas/cefta_rtg/ (accessed February 1, 2009).

further scrutiny later in this study) means that joining CEFTA represented another positive step in the direction of broader cooperation within European spheres of influence.

Another important area to examine is that of bilateral trade between the European Union and Moldova. An increased focus on trade with the European Union by the Moldovan government has seen bilateral trade increase and grow steadily since 2005. Though Moldova may prove a largely insignificant trading partner to the European Union (because of its vast size and wealth), the EU is committed to pushing for closer economic ties with Moldova. The EU is hoping that closer economic ties will enable Moldova to diversify its exports, and subsequently will allow for increased economic integration. The EU is currently Moldova's "most important trading partner" (especially after Romania joined the body in 2007), and the EU hopes to continue the trends of economic growth and gradual development in Moldova.¹⁶

Looking to the future of Moldova's European-based trade relations, one must note another significant aspect of a proposed increase in cooperation. On February 23, 2009, word came from Brussels that the European Union is looking to promote further integration with former Soviet states. As recently as March 2009, the EU announced that it will upgrade the status of several non-EU countries (including Moldova) that are currently cooperating through what is known as the European Neighborhood Policy. Under the new policy, these countries will become a part of the newly established "Eastern Partnership."¹⁷ The European Union's External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner cited the need for this partnership as a means for assisting with the stabilization of ex-Soviet economies, and also as a way to reduce the

¹⁶ European Union, "European Commission - External Trade - Trade Issues: The Republic of Moldova," July, 2008, http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/moldova/index_en.htm (accessed February 2, 2009).

¹⁷ Ahto Lobjakas, "EU Foreign Ministers Discuss Eastern Partnership," *Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty*, February, 23, 2009. <http://www.rferl.org/>, (accessed February 25, 2009).

influence of Russia in the region.¹⁸ With regard to Russia, the Commissioner specifically spoke of the issues of Russian interference in the Georgian separatist region of South Ossetia (a situation with broader implications for Moldova and Transnistria) and Moscow's use of gas and energy politics in dealing with former Soviet states. The EU seems to be promoting enhanced collaboration with these Eastern European states as a means of alleviating the effects of recent Russian aggression. Whether this policy of cooperation deters Russia from expanding its sphere of influence remains to be seen, and one would not be surprised if the policy actually serves to enhance Russian aggression.

These agreements seem to indicate several major themes in the context of trade relations. The first theme is that the Moldovan government, under the direction of President Voronin, hopes to facilitate Moldova's broader incorporation into European trading markets (though he also recognizes Russia's important role in building the Moldovan economy). Economic cooperation with Europe will not only grow the Moldovan economy, but it will also allow for diversified markets, which Moldova could desperately use. With access to a greater number of markets, Moldova will no longer rely so heavily on Moscow as a trading partner, and in turn, Moscow will have less leverage with which it can manipulate the decisions made by the Moldovan government.

The second theme is that it now appears as though European markets want Moldova as a partner in trade. This proves important because the relationship is now reciprocal. The situation is no longer one in which the Moldovan government reaches out to Europe, and Europe in turn rejects their advances. By reaching out through initiatives such as the "Eastern Partnership" and CEFTA, the European sphere of influence is expanding. This proves important because the

¹⁸ "EU Urges Members to Provide More Aid to Ex-Soviet Nations," *Deutsche Welle*, February 23, 2009, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4050693,00.html>, (accessed February 25, 2009).

expansion of “Europe” is providing Moldova (and other similar states) with options. No longer are Eastern European states confined within the Kremlin’s neighborhood. With continuing efforts toward European integration through trade, the Moldovan government may one day shake the country’s strong dependency on Russia if it so chooses.

Russia’s Economic Domination of Moldova

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, most of the former Soviet states still wanted and needed intense economic involvement with Russian markets. Largely due to the fact that Russia had acted as the centerpiece of the USSR (with good reason), it still held most of the capital and resources that the smaller states needed. Thus, out of necessity, the majority of former Soviet states formed the Commonwealth of Independent States. Moldova, as a small and largely underdeveloped state, desperately needed access to those larger markets, so they signed the Creation Agreement of the CIS in 1991.

Beginning in 1994, most of the members of the CIS—including Moldova and the Russian Federation—signed a free trade agreement that would establish the entire region as a free trade area.¹⁹ Like most other free trade agreements, the CISFTA stipulated a gradual cancellation of tariffs, coordination of trade policies, and eliminations of barriers to trade.²⁰ This all bade well for Moldova at the time of ratification because the country, having recently emerged from a civil war, desperately needed economic stability. Unfortunately, however, the inability to reconcile the Transnistrian problem left Moldova and Russia at odds, and as a result, Russia has used trade and economics as a means for supporting the Transnistrian separatist regime. In doing so, Moscow often enacts policies that serve to weaken the Moldovan economy.

¹⁹ Commonwealth of Independent States, “Free Trade Agreement between Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, The Russian Federation, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic,” <http://www.worldtradelaw.net/fta/agreements/cisfta.pdf> (accessed February 4, 2009).

²⁰ Ibid.

After an important round of bilateral talks between Moldova and Russia failed to bring about any resolution on the issue of the Transnistrian separatist region in 2005, the Russian Duma decided that the state would ban the import of Moldovan wine and meat.²¹ Though the Russian government claimed the official reason for the ban was health-related, many stipulated that it enacted the policy to curb what were deemed to be increasingly anti-Russian policy decisions by the Moldovan government.²² Due to the fact that wine and meat are two of the biggest sources of revenue for Moldovan citizens, the ban drastically strained the Moldovan economy. With little effect to the Russian economy, the ban served mainly as a way for the Kremlin to inform Moldova that it had better cooperate over the Transnistrian issue. During the ban (it was lifted after Moldova informed Moscow that the ban would prove a stumbling block to Russia's potential integration into the WTO), the Moldovan economy deteriorated severely, and the country was left in an even poorer state than usual.²³ During the ban, Moldova's trade deficit increased sharply to \$193 million from January to November, and the wine industry was estimated to have lost over \$180 million in revenue.²⁴ When these numbers are compared to previous years, the statistics show just how sharply the economy in Moldova fell. The trade deficit mentioned above, for instance, was a far cry from the \$86 million surplus just a year earlier in 2005.²⁵ It seems clear from the evidence that the Kremlin understood that banning imports on Moldovan wine and meat would effectively bring the economy to its knees. It seems

²¹ C.J. Chivers, "A Russian 'Wine Blockade' Against Georgia and Moldova," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2006.

²² Pravda, "Russian Law-Makers to Outlaw Moldovan Wine," March 9, 2005, http://english.pravda.ru/main/18/89/357/15077_wine.html (accessed April 12, 2009).

²³ Steven L. Myers, "Russia: Putin Lifts Moldova Trade Ban," *The New York Times*, November 26, 2006.

²⁴ Ryan Kennedy, "Moldova: Counting Losses as Russian Wine Ban Lingers," *Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty*, April 4, 2007.

²⁵ Ryan Kennedy, "Moldova: Counting Losses as Russian Wine Ban Lingers," *Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty*, April 4, 2007.

that this move by the Russian Duma was a successful attempt to utilize Russia's "economic clout for political purposes," and as a result, the Moldovan economy tanked.²⁶

Notwithstanding the sometimes-mild cooperation between the Moldovan and Russian governments in the area of trade, the two countries often find themselves at odds with one another. As a result, trade disputes occur, and Moldova tends to feel the repercussions much more than Russia does. In most of these disputes, several themes arise. The first is that Moldova, though striving for stronger collaboration with European trading markets, remains heavily reliant on Russia for economic growth. Russia represents a massive market, and Moldovan companies need to be able to sell their products to continue to develop. In fact, in 2008, after the ban had been lifted, the Moldovan Prime Minister "expressed a desire to increase investment levels" from Russian firms.²⁷ The second theme is that the Russian economy feels far fewer ill-effects than Moldova's when excluding Moldovan imports.²⁸ While not entirely immune from the economic impact of a trade embargo, Russia is in a much stronger economic position to handle the drop in market goods.²⁹ The two aforementioned themes make for a situation that is directly opposite of the one Moldova faces with Europe. Whereas the EU and other European states are looking to expand and incorporate Moldovan markets into their economic realms, Russia often employs methods of exclusion. Some argue that this is to teach Moldova some sort of lesson, while others believe it provides an effective tool for Russia to obtain what it desires from the smaller state. It seems inherent, then, that the Moldovan government would look toward Europe for assurances in

²⁶ Peter Finn, "Russia Uncorks Another Trade Dispute: Wine From Georgia and Moldova Is Banned as Ex-Soviet States Anger Moscow," *The Washington Post*, April 7, 2006.

²⁷ "Moldova: Chisinau Supports Increase in Russian Investment and Trade," January 15, 2008, <http://www.washprofile.org/en/node/7340> (accessed February 6, 2009).

²⁸ "Europe: Toxic Triple, but All Our Own; Russian Trade Embargoes," *The Economist* 379, no. 8473 (2006): 41.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

future endeavors, in hopes that Moldova can one day escape the increasingly destructive economic relationship it shares with Moscow.

On the economic front, therefore, Russia has used trade as a means through which to attempt to dominate Moldova. Through the establishment of policies that are harmful to Moldova's economy, Russia is actually hoping to ensure that Moldova remains within Moscow's domain. Knowing that countries must reach reasonable economic levels in order to accede into the European Union, Russia can effectively eliminate Moldova from even receiving consideration for EU integration by imposing economic domination. This is not to say that Moldova is anywhere near accession; rather, it is simply demonstrating that the process of gradual integration will take much longer to accomplish as a result of the setbacks that have been incurred. By making Europe an afterthought for Moldova, Russia can continue to manipulate the Moldovan government for many decades to come.

Moldova's Political Engagement with Europe and NATO

Having just analyzed certain aspects of Moldova's designs on broader economic cooperation with the European Union, it will also prove important to examine the official political relationship between the EU and the Moldovan government. The history of the relationship is fairly brief, but continues to increase in importance. And although Moldova must make tremendous strides before any significant assimilation occurs, the seeds have been sown, and the European Union seems adamant about helping the Moldovan government achieve its goals.

Moldova began serious negotiations with the EU in 2003, when it joined what is known as the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Two years later, the Delegation of the European Commission established a formal diplomatic mission in Chisinau (the capital of Moldova).

Typical of most countries aspiring to join the European Union, Moldova invited the mission in as a way of overseeing and providing assistance and advice regarding the key strategic improvements that Moldova would have to make.³⁰ The European Neighborhood Policy began as an initiative that was designed to eliminate economic and social divides between a continually-expanding European Union and its closest neighbors.³¹ This initiative provided a way in which the EU could foster cordial relations and promote stability beyond its enlarging frontiers.

Since the establishment of the mission in Chisinau, the European Union has been working alongside the Moldovan government to ensure that development provisions are met in a reasonable and timely manner. Specifically, the delegation's mandate is designed to do several things: foster further cooperation with governmental institutions to promote economic and political stability; monitor implementation of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements; promote EU development and policies to the public of Moldova; and to implement the EU's external assistance programs.³² These initiatives, along with those outlined earlier that mentioned the implementation of an "Eastern Partnership" seem to demonstrate good faith on the part of the European Union. That is to say, the EU continues to reach out to countries that have not yet reached the prominence of most Western European states, whether in the realms of economic, political, or social stability. By encouraging states such as Moldova to continue to adopt and grow in the traditions of democracy, the European Union seems to be ensuring its own long-term security while promoting the ideals that will likely facilitate long-term security of neighboring states.

³⁰ European Union, "Mission Statement – The European Union's Delegation to Moldova," <http://www.delmda.ec.europa.eu> (accessed January 29, 2009).

³¹ European Union, "The Policy: What is the European Neighborhood Policy," July 19, 2008, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm (accessed January 29, 2009).

³² European Union, "Mission Statement...".

The European Union has also shown a willingness to provide assistance to the Moldovan government in its attempts to secure its border with Ukraine. Indeed, at the request of both the Moldovan and Ukrainian governments, the European Union established what is known as the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM). This entity seeks to build political cooperation between the EU, Moldova, and Ukraine, and provides technical assistance to improve border management standards. Founding this border mission enables the EU to garner greater stability in both Moldova and Ukraine, but it also provides the opportunity to establish a more robust security frontier for all of Europe.³³ EUBAM demonstrates the EU's willingness to reach out to its neighbors in a positive and effective manner, and this shows that political engagement with Moldova is moving in an encouraging direction.

Before moving on, it is also important to note the Moldovan government's desire for greater political cooperation and assimilation into the European sphere of influence. Through an examination of many of the statements made by officials within the Moldovan government, one gets a sense that this country is largely hoping for a future that looks to the West rather than the East for economic and political direction. On the Moldovan government's website, for instance, an interview was conducted with the Foreign and European Integration Minister, Andrei Stratan. First and foremost, the mere fact that the Moldovan government maintains a cabinet position entitled the "European Integration Minister" speaks volumes about the country's desire to join the European Union at some point in the distant future. In the interview itself, when asked about the goals of Moldovan diplomacy, Andrei Stratan's response is geared almost entirely toward

³³ European Union, "EUBAM – European Union Border Assistance Mission," 2007, <http://www.eubam.org/> (accessed April 9, 2009).

“preparing the ground for future accession into the European Union.”³⁴ One should note that the Minister also mentions improving relations with CIS countries and maintaining cordial relations with the United States and Romania as important goals, but above all else, he claims that preparation for eventual EU integration is the central focus of diplomatic policy.³⁵

In 2005, following the so-called “color revolutions” that took place in states such as Ukraine and Georgia, the Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin took a decidedly pro-West stance in the run-up to his country’s elections.³⁶ More than that, Voronin took the opportunity to completely reverse the rhetoric of his first campaign (he was originally sympathetic toward Russia), and his anti-Russian rhetoric became increasingly heated.³⁷ This anti-Russian oratory seems to mirror public opinion. In fact, Moldova’s Public Policy Institute claimed that Moldova would likely have an easier path to European integration because public opinion was “not so split” (as public policy in Ukraine and Georgia) on the issue of relations with Russia.³⁸ In other words, the Moldovan public largely supports the government’s pro-European views, in part because a majority of the population feels some measure of disdain toward Russia. (Note: In light of Moldova’s very recent elections, it is important to state that some Moldovans believe President Voronin and the communist government is not moving quickly enough toward European integration. Additionally, some analysts believe he could begin looking less toward Europe if the economic crisis continues).³⁹

³⁴ Republic of Moldova, “Conversation with Foreign and European Integration Minister Andrei Stratan,” July 25, 2007, <http://www.moldova.md/en/relatile/2397/> (accessed February 12, 2009).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Jeremy Page, “Moldova has pro-Western Revolution Even Before Poll is Held,” *The Times (London)*, March 5, 2005.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Owen Matthews, “Fading to Black: Moldova’s Would-be Color Revolution Fails. Chalk One up for the Kremlin,” *Newsweek* 153, no. 16 (2009): 16.

With regard to joining NATO, the message emanating from Chisinau can be described as mixed. While membership in NATO would certainly provide benefits for the country, several factors keep Moldova from joining the organization. As it currently stands, NATO has implemented projects within Moldova that will assist the state in achieving a higher level of European assimilation. Moldova's defense minister has described these projects and the partnership with NATO as being "beneficial to Moldova."⁴⁰ Leaders of the National Liberal Party (PNL) believe that Moldova should strive to seek membership in NATO in the future, especially given the events that occurred in Georgia during the summer of 2008.⁴¹ This would require significant political will, however, because of a stipulation in the Moldovan constitution that officially declares Moldova as a neutral entity. As a result, a fifty-plus-one vote would be necessary to overturn the neutrality clause in the constitution. Advocates of changing the clause feel that joining NATO would provide Moldova with greater leverage in attempts to solve the Transnistrian crisis. Some government officials, such as President Voronin, believe that Moldova should remain neutral and pursue a path toward demilitarization. Additionally, and somewhat intelligently, President Voronin does not wish to spend a large portion of the Moldovan government's money on defense, especially given the fact that his country's economy continues to struggle. The mixed messages out of Chisinau likely mean that Moldova will not officially join NATO in any capacity (at least in the near future). Continued cooperation, however, likely spells advances for Moldova's attempts to cooperate more broadly with Europe and the West.

While these collaborative political and security efforts with the EU and NATO represent part of Moldova's desire to join the Western political realm, it is also vital that this analytical

⁴⁰ AllMoldova, "Moldova-NATO Commission has been Established," August 8, 2005, <http://www.allmoldova.com/index.php?action=newsblock&id=1123493540&lng=eng> (accessed March 27, 2009).

⁴¹ Moldova.org, "PNL Says Moldova Should Immediately Join NATO and Withdraw from the CIS," August 13, 2008, <http://politicom.moldova.org/news/pnl-says-moldova-should-immediately-join-nato-and-withdraw-from-the-cis-142111-eng.html> (accessed April 3, 2009).

study examines the reaction and views of Russia on the issue. Because this is an analysis of the ways in which Russia uses its power to effectively manipulate Moldovan policy, it will prove important to understand the actions emanating from Moscow.

Russia's Political and Military Domination of Transnistria (and Moldova)

As NATO began announcing key countries for expansion consideration, Russia began to take notice. NATO's importance as a security-focused entity with political ties to many strategic European countries causes nervousness in Russia. This became especially true as NATO began expanding into those countries that had traditionally been considered part of Russia's backyard. In 2004, the inclusion of Romania (Moldova's neighbor and traditional ally) and the Baltic States into NATO was met with staunch Russian opposition. At a 2008 meeting of NATO members that took place in Bucharest, Romania, the organization announced the inclusion of Croatia and Albania (both former states within the so-called Eastern Bloc) beginning in 2009. The piece of news that most infuriated the Russian government, however, was that Ukraine and Georgia would join NATO at a future date to be announced. Indeed, NATO plans on enlarging into two traditional strongholds of Russian influence, and this angered the Kremlin. The thought of former Soviet states joining their one-time foe NATO, and the cooperation of states such as Moldova with NATO, caused Moscow to take action. Vladimir Putin, in his final address to the nation's top military officials as President, said that Russia would "suspend [Russia's] participation in the adapted Conventional Forces in Europe treaty" because he believed doing so represented an "appropriate response" to NATO's incursion into states that border Russia and its sphere of influence.⁴²

⁴² Simon Saradzhyan, "Putin Talking Adequate Response to NATO," *The Moscow Times*, November 21, 2007.

The aforementioned decision by Russia has repercussions for Moldova because the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty articulates stipulations that Russia must eventually remove its troops from Moldovan territory (the original date for removal had been 2002, but Russia failed to comply).⁴³ As a result of this decision, 700 troops of the Russian 14th Army remain posted on Transnistrian territory, an additional 800 “peacekeepers” from Russia monitor the border between Transnistria and Moldova, and roughly 20,000 tons of ammunition remain in former Soviet stockpiles within Transnistria.⁴⁴ Though it is unlikely that the Russian government had any intentions of dissolving their military’s presence in Transnistria, the decision to suspend participation in the adapted CFE treaty virtually assures a longer presence on the ground in the breakaway region. This, in turn, means that Moldova’s sovereignty remains challenged, and the country must continue to live with the realities of Russian prominence in the region.

It should come as no surprise that Russia also maintains a bit of worry over the expansion of the European Union into its neighboring states. Essentially, Russia wants no part of EU integration in the future because the Russian government’s ideology runs counter to that of Europe. In essence, Europe as it exists today (within the context of the European Union) is attempting to transcend the idea of the nation-state in an effort to reduce the power of individual states, whereas Russia is attempting to restore its state and influence to previous levels.⁴⁵ History can partially explain these differences. Many Europeans, for instance, still perceive the 1930s as a low point their collective history, largely due to the rise of extreme nationalism throughout the continent. Russians, on the other hand, basically tend to see the 1990s as the decade of their

⁴³ NATO, “Questions and Answers on CFE,” May 2007, http://www.nato.int/issues/arms_control/cfe_qa_factsheet.pdf (accessed February 10, 2009).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Robert Kagan, “New Europe, Old Russia,” *The Washington Post*, February 6, 2008.

demise.⁴⁶ This illuminates an important reason why Russia and the EU currently seem headed in opposite directions. As Russia attempts to restore a sense of its former glory, the European Union has its sights set on completely transforming the old international order.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the EU and Russia are often at odds on various issues. In fact, after the Russian invasion of South Ossetia and Georgia in the summer of 2008, the EU collectively condemned the actions of the Russian government and military.⁴⁷ Russia, in response, essentially informed the Europeans that their opinions did not influence the decisions of the Russian government. In fact, President Medvedev even went so far as to declare that he did not mind if international organizations began excluding Russia from their meetings, and also stated that he would be open to the idea of halting relations with international organizations altogether.⁴⁸ Clearly, much of the rhetoric from the EU and Russia represents a relationship that is typical in balance-of-power Realism. That is to say, both sides maintain differing ideologies, and attempt to promote them at any chance possible. This, in turn, often results in a situation in which the two powerful entities clash diplomatically.

In and of itself, the clash of two large regional powers is not out of the ordinary, nor is it extremely consequential to the powers involved. Smaller states, however, often find themselves sandwiched between two powers, and become a sort of battleground of ideologies. Moldova, for instance, fits this description to a certain extent. With the EU reaching out to the Moldovan government economically and politically, and the Russian military maintaining a presence in the Transnistrian separatist region, it is likely that Moldova will continue to struggle to obtain complete sovereignty over its own affairs. During the Cold War, ideological battles raged in countries like Nicaragua and Angola. Today, though on a smaller scale, Moldova finds itself in a

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Anonymous, "Europe Stands up to Russia after Georgia," *The Economist* 388, no. 8596 (2008).

⁴⁸ "Who Needs You, Russia Tells West," *The Gazette (Montreal)*, August 28, 2008.

similar position. This all seems to suggest that the Realist paradigm, with a focus on analyzing state actors, regional security, and balances of power, remains relevant in an era that many believed would bring about the demise of such archetypes.

Russia's Negative Energy Relations with Moldova

Of the many options that Russia maintains in order to keep Moldova within its sphere of influence, perhaps the most frustrating to the Moldovan government is Russia's use of gas and energy as a tool for manipulation. The fact that Russian state-owned gas companies own and supply the vast majority of Moldovan natural gas and energy proves a source of extreme tension for Moldovan relations with Russia.⁴⁹ By raising prices or simply cutting off supply, the Russian state-owned gas and energy companies have effectively forced Moldova into a situation in which it cannot pay its bills or provide basic heating for its citizens in the harsh Eastern European winters.⁵⁰

During the Soviet period, Transnistria was the industrial heart of the Moldovan SSR. The territory supplied roughly 90% of Moldovan electricity and natural gas. After the civil war, arrangements were made so that Transnistria continued to supply the Moldovan Republic with gas and energy.⁵¹ Due to the fact that Transnistria remains sympathetic toward Russia, the breakaway region's gas and energy supplies continue to produce under the ownership of Russian state-owned corporations. Gas and energy have thus become important tools for Russia in fostering favorable diplomatic relations with the Moldovan government. That is to say, Russia can often utilize these resources to attempt to dictate Moldovan policies.

⁴⁹ GlobalSecurity.org, "Transdnier," December 17, 2006, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/transdnier.htm> (accessed April 22, 2009).

⁵⁰ Chloe Bruce, "Power Resources: The Political Agenda in Russo-Moldovan Gas Relations," *Problems of Post-Communism* 54, no. 3 (2007), 29-47.

⁵¹ U.S. Library of Congress, "Country Studies – Moldova – Energy and Fuel," June 1995, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+md0040\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+md0040)) (accessed February 10, 2009).

Examining the history of Russian-Moldovan diplomatic relations and the way in which diplomacy relates to gas, an interesting pattern emerges. Essentially, after Russia began using energy as a means to coerce smaller states into joining the CIS, the government realized that energy had the potential to act as a powerful tool in many areas of diplomatic negotiations.⁵² Thus, in the years from 1999-2001, when Moldova began distancing itself from Russian influence, a conflict over gas arose. After a period of normalization following Moldova's election of a communist president, Vladimir Voronin, relations began to sour again. A similar pattern of conflict over diplomacy and gas occurred in the years from 2003-2005, when Moldova began to press for a small degree of European cooperation.⁵³ Once again, Russia had essentially given Moldova an ultimatum: support our policies and remain sympathetic toward our government, or face some undesirable consequences. In fairness, it must be said that many countries impose sanctions or other methods as a means of coercion, but cutting off gas and electricity could have fatal repercussions for many living in poverty (Moldova is the poorest state in Europe).⁵⁴ As a consequence of these actions, Moldova cannot achieve total sovereignty until they obtain the ability and the right to make decisions without the threat of losing their most basic resources.

Gas cuts are not the only means through which Russia can manipulate Moldova's policy decisions. Rate increases also serve as an effective tool. In 2001, the Moldovan government and Gazprom (Russia's largest state-owned gas company) implemented a plan that would hopefully allow Moldova to continue to receive gas, even as rates spiked. In short, the Moldovan government would pay seventy-five percent of the market price for gas from 2002 until 2004,

⁵² Chloe Bruce, "Power Resources," 29-47.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Leyla Keough, "Globalizing 'Postsocialism': Mobile Mothers and Neoliberalism on the Margins of Europe," *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2006): 432.

and the debt accumulated during that period would be paid in 2005.⁵⁵ During this period, however, the Moldovan government began adopting pro-Western policies, and as a result, Russian-owned Gazprom began to renege on the deal. The company sent a message to Chisinau demanding payment, and threatened to halve the supplies of gas. After this ultimatum failed to generate a response, Gazprom offered another deal. This time, the company proposed an agreement that would forgive Moldovan debts if the Moldovan government allowed Gazprom to hold a larger percentage of shares in the Moldovan gas company, Moldova Gaz. President Voronin rejected the deal because it appeared to the Moldovan public as if the Russians intended to simply buy all of the assets within the country. Due to the fact that no deal was brokered, Gazprom cut gas supplies in October 2003.⁵⁶ This is just one example of the way in which a wealthy and powerful Russian government attempts to use gas and energy supplies as a mechanism for punishing the Moldovan people's designs at broader integration within the European sphere of influence.

This section of the analytical study outlines the way in which Russia utilizes their state-owned gas companies based in Transnistria to assert dominance over the Moldovan regime. As Moldova pushed for a degree of greater collaboration with the EU and other Western trading partners, Russia used its power to attempt to warn the Moldovan government from veering too far from the Russian domain. Gas and energy prove to be effective tools for the Russian government, because it can often bring about negotiations that are favorable to the Russian cause. Due to the fact that Russia maintains vast resources in its huge expanse of territory, and because few other states in the region have the fossil fuel supplies of Russia, it can easily withhold its resources to receive concessions. By utilizing fossil fuels as a negotiating tool, the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Russian government hopes to grow and maintain a balance of power in the region of Eastern Europe. This example proves, once again, that Realism remains an important standard when assessing international relations in the post-Cold War era.

First Analytical Study Conclusion

Moldova, a country struggling to redefine itself in a new era of political and economic development, continues to face significant setbacks. The country's geographic location and historical ties to both Russia and Romania place it directly between two growing spheres of influence. In one direction, Moldova faces an ever-expanding European system of governance and economics that promotes inclusion based upon desire. In the other direction, the country faces a resurgent Russia, looking to rebuild a sort of pseudo empire twenty years after the fall of the Soviet Union. Knowing that the Moldovan government relies heavily on Russian goods and services, the Russian government makes use of its vast resources to hold Moldova within its political and economic domain. Whether through trade bans or hikes in gas prices, Russia understands that it can effectively cripple the Moldovan economy, making the small state's European aspirations even more miniscule. By opposing the EU and NATO in key decisions, Russia demonstrates that it has no interest in allowing some of its most important former states to look toward the West for political and economic direction.

All of the examples discussed in this study demonstrate the reasons why, in terms of international relations, the Realist paradigm cannot be neglected. Following the Cold War, many scholars felt that the ideas of states acting as the most powerful entities in international relations would prove inapplicable. In addition, some argued that state or multi-state actors would no longer look to expand influence abroad, but would instead look to cooperate more effectively

with one another. This first analytical study seems to demonstrate that both of these basic tenets of Realism remain important and pertinent in this modern era.

**Second Analytical Study:
Trafficking as a New Mechanism of Russian Influence in Moldova**

This second analytical study will examine the Russian presence in Transnistria and Moldova, and the events transpiring at old Soviet weapons stockpiles and border crossings, where—it has been reported—the Russian 14th army tends to harass outsiders while enabling corruption.⁵⁷ The study will attempt to analyze the actions of the Russian military, Russian organized crime, and Russian business firms to determine the extent to which Russia and Russians are involved in the trafficking of arms and peoples in Transnistria and Moldova. Through an evaluation of various sources—some first-hand and some secondary—this analytical study will attempt to shed light on the way in which trafficking is used as an effective tool used to keep smaller, less secure states such as Moldova within the Russian sphere of authority.

The study will be conducted in two parts. The first portion will look to examine the way in which arms trafficking inside and outside of Transnistria occurs. This will involve an analysis of some of the people, places, and motives for weapons trafficking. Additionally, it will look to determine some of the states to which the illegal arms are trafficked in an attempt to shed light on the dangers that can potentially arise because of illicit arms trafficking.

The second portion of the study will analyze the way in which human trafficking occurs in Transnistria and Moldova. While explaining some of the intricacies of the trafficking practices, this study will also attempt to explain exactly why human trafficking poses a threat to the state security and sovereignty of Moldova. Within the context of both portions of the study, it

⁵⁷ *Trafficking Arms On Europe's Doorstep*. Cutting Edge. Canal, Paris. 01 Aug 2006.

will be made clear exactly how the states involved are affected by trafficking, and how that affects their broader policy aims.

Additionally, this first study will demonstrate that the Realist archetype for international relations remains applicable to today's world. By showing that states remain the most powerful actors in the region, and by demonstrating that the idea of balance of power drives many decisions, this study will prove that Realism continues to present an important and relevant paradigm in the post-Cold War era.

Weapons Trafficking as a Mechanism of Russian Domination

Obtaining information from a state that does not officially exist can prove extremely difficult. The pseudo-state does not have to adhere to any manifestations of international law or treaties, nor does it have any obligations to act as a rational state. Therefore, finding and conducting research about the Transnistrian breakaway region does not prove to be a simple task. A select few have had success infiltrating the system, and they provide valuable insight into the practice of weapons trafficking from the territory.

Transnistria is estimated to hold roughly 50,000 tons of arms—some new, some old, and some modified to increase the damage inflicted upon their targets.⁵⁸ Some of these weapons, known as Alazan rockets, are coveted because they are easily fitted with warheads containing radiological and biological agents that have the ability to kill hundreds of people.⁵⁹ The stockpiles of weapons that remained in Transnistria after the Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe represent a threat to regional stability and global peace. Due to the fact that the borders of Transnistria are loosely monitored by Russian and Transnistrian border officials, thousands of

⁵⁸ Joby Warrick, "Dirty Bomb Warheads Disappear; Stocks of Soviet-Era Arms For Sale on Black Market," *The Washington Post*, December 7, 2003.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

weapons and ammunitions have flowed across the border into Ukraine.⁶⁰ From there, many are shipped out of the Black Sea port of Odessa, and make their way to states in the surrounding areas.

Many of the weapons trafficked out of Transnistria travel thousands of miles to war zones in areas such as the Caucasus and Central Africa.⁶¹ Some of the arms are transported through the sea port in Odessa, others are flown directly out of the airport in Tiraspol (the Transnistrian capital), while others make their way by rail and automobile through Ukraine and Russia.⁶² This process is made easier by what are known as flags of convenience. Essentially, arms dealers use planes and ships that are registered under the flag of a country that actually has no business in the arms deals. The crew is often formed of people representing several nationalities, as well.⁶³ For instance, a plane that was bound from Transnistria to Liberia in the year 2000 was registered and deregistered all in the same day under the Moldovan flag, but was chartered by a Congolese company that did not actually exist.⁶⁴ The fact that these weapons from Transnistria are transported so easily to states such as Liberia and Congo indicate that the arms dealers receive help from officials in unstable states. Additionally, because these weapons find use in some of the world's bloodiest conflicts, the issue of arms trafficking in Transnistria represents a significant challenge to global security as well as regional stability.

Planes leave Transnistria through the only airstrip in the region located in Tiraspol. Through technically "unused," and guarded only by the Russian military, it has been widely reported that airliners have been spotted coming and going from the airstrip, often under the cover of darkness. With no entity other than the Russian military allowed to monitor the airstrip,

⁶⁰ Moises Naim, *Illicit*, New York: Anchor Books, 2005, 57-59.

⁶¹ Warrick.

⁶² Naim, 57-59.

⁶³ Paul Duclos, *Flags of Convenience*, Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2007, 15-19.

⁶⁴ Naim, 63.

it is stipulated that traffickers are able to use the airstrip at their convenience.⁶⁵ With no official checks at the airstrip, this likely proves one of the easiest ways through which traffickers can deliver their cargo to clients throughout the region. This seems to demonstrate a level of complicity on the part of the Russian military to allow trafficking to persist in the Transnistrian separatist region. Though there is no concrete evidence that members of the Russian military are actually trafficking commodities out of the airstrip, there is significant proof to imply cooperation on their part.

Having examined some of the methods of weapons trafficking, it will prove valuable to now consider some of the powerful people who run in the trafficking circles of Transnistria. Viktor Bout, an infamous Russian arms dealer once touted as the “Merchant of Death,” operated out of Transnistria.⁶⁶ From there, he set up fictitious transportation companies around the world, ran deals with the Transnistrian authorities, and helped to supply various factions of the civil wars that raged in countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone.⁶⁷ It should be noted that he has worked in various other countries, as well. The fact that he has worked in Transnistria, however, presents evidence that the regime protected his interests. Another prominent Russian trafficker to have worked in Transnistria is a man by the name of Alexander Zhukov, who was involved in Russian organized crime rings.⁶⁸ That many of these traffickers are of Russian origin is not noteworthy in and of itself. The fact that the Russian government attempts to protect and provide amnesty to these criminals, however, merits further analysis.

⁶⁵ *Transnistria – Europe’s Black Hole*. Journeyman Pictures. London. Dec 2006.

⁶⁶ William Finnegan, “The Countertraffickers: Rescuing the Victims of the Global Sex Trade,” *The New Yorker*, May 5, 2008, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/05/05/080505fa_fact_finnegan.

⁶⁷ Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun, *Merchant of Death: Money, Guns, Planes, and the Man who Makes War Possible*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2007, 2-169.

⁶⁸ Stefan Candea and Sorin Ozon, “Usual Suspects,” *Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism*, July 30, 2006, http://old.crji.org/e_index.htm.

In 2002, when Belgium and Interpol put out a warrant for the arrest of Viktor Bout, he fled to his native Russia to seek amnesty. While in Russia, Bout found protection under several provisions outlined in the Russian constitution that protect Russian citizens from extradition to foreign states for criminal trials.⁶⁹ He remained under the protection of Moscow until 2008, when he was arrested by a U.S. agency during an arms deal in Thailand. Immediately after his arrest, the Russian government continued to support Viktor Bout, and even asked for his return to Russia and expressed worry that other states might attempt to use his trial “against Russia” in some way.⁷⁰

Alexander Zhukov, implicated in an arms shipment that was intercepted on its way to Bosnia, spent six months in an Italian prison after he was arrested in 1999.⁷¹ Though opposed to his sentence, the Russian government had little grounds to push for Zhukov’s release. The mere fact that the Russia government opposed his sentence, however, demonstrates a lack of consideration for the rule of law and an outright contempt for assuring that its own citizens are held accountable for misconduct.

The Russian government, even with evidence of weapons trafficking by their citizens, fails to bring them to justice. Whether or not one should call this “abetting” trafficking is up for debate. But regardless of whether they are complicit in allowing trafficking to occur, it is evident that the Russian government does not believe that it should punish those who commit the crime of trafficking. Perhaps denial represents the best way in which the Russian government believes it can protect its image abroad. By denying any wrongdoing, however, the Russian government implicitly denies that any illegal activities occur in the Transnistrian separatist region. If the

⁶⁹ Farah and Braun, 180-210.

⁷⁰ “Russian Arms Dealer Trial Opens,” *BBC News – Asia/Pacific*, September 22, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7628863.stm> (accessed February 24, 2009).

⁷¹ Tony Thompson, “UK Banker’s Link to Arms Plot,” *The Guardian Unlimited*, December 9, 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4316291,00.html> (accessed March 29, 2009).

government acknowledged that trafficking occurred in Transnistria, it would be working to dismantle a territorial entity that it essentially props up.

The ethnic Russians who govern in Transnistria—led by Igor Smirnov—also make tremendous amounts of money through a Transnistrian firm called Sheriff. Sheriff essentially runs the Transnistrian trafficking operation, and functions as the largest corporation in Transnistria. Sheriff also owns everything from petrol stations to laundry mats. And Sheriff is opportunistically owned and operated by none other than Vladimir Smirnov—the president’s son. It proves convenient then that Vladimir Smirnov also heads the Transnistrian Customs Service that is notorious for allowing illicit goods to travel across Transnistrian borders without proper checks.⁷² By controlling the largest Transnistrian company (one that makes millions of dollars in illicit arms deals) and the Customs Service, the Smirnov’s run a pseudo-state that acts as an economic enterprise.

It is important to remember that the Russian military remains in Transnistria as a way to maintain the territory’s “sovereignty.” In other words, the Russian military acts as the protector of the Transnistrian regime and is therefore complicit in the illegal activities that occur in the state. The fact that many Russian troops patrol the border crossings provides further evidence that the Russian and Transnistrian governments act cooperatively to ensure the success of the Sheriff trafficking operation.

After examining the facts about weapons trafficking in Transnistria, it becomes obvious that Russia plays an important role in the process of illicit arms dealing. Not only do several Russian “businessmen” initiate the deals, the Russian government ensures the survival and continuation of a corrupt regime in Transnistria. In addition, the Russian government also refuses

⁷² Joby Warrick, “Dirty Bomb Warheads Disappear; Stocks of Soviet-Era Arms For Sale on Black Market,” *The Washington Post*, December 7, 2003.

to bring illegal arms traffickers within its borders to justice. This proves important because it ensures that weapons trafficking can continue to occur within the territory of the Moldovan state. Illegal trafficking has a massive effect on the Moldovan population's designs of broader integration into the European sphere of influence. These implications, and how they function in the Realist paradigm of international relations, will be discussed after first examining human trafficking that occurs within the territory of Moldova.

Human Trafficking as a Mechanism of Russian Domination

Another form of trafficking that deeply affects Moldova and the Eastern European region is that of human trafficking. Specifically, the sex trade occurring in Moldova and Transnistria is a major obstacle to any designs the Moldovan government may have to integrate with the European Union in the future. The trafficking of women and men to work as slaves in various industries (most often the sex industry) not only deprives Moldova of valuable human capital in the country's developing industries, but it also creates major security risks at both the human and state levels throughout the region.

Human trafficking in Moldova and Transnistria has become an increasingly widespread problem. During the late-1990's and early-2000's, it was the case that most trafficked Moldovans ended up working as sex slaves in the Balkan region, largely to fill brothels near the legions of NATO troops stationed in the region. After many of those troops left, however, human traffickers began shifting their focus to different regions. The sex trade began growing mainly in the countries of Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Russia. In 2000, 22 percent of Moldovan trafficking victims reported being trafficked to one of these three countries; by 2004, that number had risen to 97 percent.⁷³ The easiest route through which humans can be trafficked goes directly

⁷³ Kara, 110.

through Transnistria. Without significant border checks, and given the relative frequency of bribery in the breakaway territory, Transnistria functions as “the main transshipment point for Moldovan women sold...via Odessa.”⁷⁴ From Ukraine, ships can travel to places such as Russia, Turkey, and Italy, while trains and automobiles transport human slaves to countries such as Russia, Belarus, and Albania. It is therefore apparent that human trafficking presents a major problem to security in the region. When countries such as Moldova cannot protect their citizens because of the actions of a few individuals (many of whom come from outside countries), the sovereignty of the state is thrown into question. Furthermore, because traffickers exploit the instability of the Transnistria region and its porous borders in order to illegally traffic Moldovan citizens, one must look at the role that the Russian government plays in using Transnistria as a tool to keep Moldova from looking toward the West.

It should be noted that it is possible for traffickers to find ways out of Moldova that do not involve Transnistria, but this has become somewhat more difficult since Romania (on Moldova’s western border) joined the European Union in 2007. With Romania becoming more and more out of the question as a route for human trafficking, many illegal traffickers have adopted Transnistria as their main point of transit. The Russian military, guarding the borders with Moldova and Ukraine, usually turn a blind eye to trafficking. When E. Benjamin Skinner, the author of a book about human trafficking, attempted to visit Transnistria with a Moldovan guide, he was detained at the border for a period of several hours as the military and police searched their car for “weapons.” During this period, however, he noted that young women in high heels and short skirts were brought across the Transnistrian border without any checks or

⁷⁴ E. Benjamin Skinner, *A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-face with Modern-Day Slavery*, New York: Free Press, 2008, 165.

supervision.⁷⁵ Similarly, an author named Siddharth Kara attempted to enter Transnistria, but was detained for hours at the border because officials there believed he had come to spy on their government. He notes the hypocrisy of allowing “drugs, guns, diamonds, cash, and women” to flow across the borders without proper scrutiny, while at the same time prohibiting a “single tourist” from entering the territory.⁷⁶

With the help of the Russian military and the support of the Russian government, Transnistria has become a place where illicit activity can flourish, so long as one works in conjunction with the current regime. By utilizing the means of the Sheriff shipping corporation and the lax border controls for insiders, individuals have successfully used Transnistria as a transit point for human slaves. By supporting the regime politically and militarily, the Russian government has become complicit in the trafficking scheme. Furthermore, because the Russian military “guards” the borders, Russia plays a direct role in allowing trafficking to occur in the territory. Additionally, the fact that many Moldovan men and women are trafficked to or through Russia also demonstrates a lack of accountability on the part of the government to halt this modern form of slavery. This is not to say that trafficking on such a large scale occurs only because the Russian government fails to stop it. Rather, many states such as Turkey, the UAE, The Netherlands, and Italy have reported high incidence of human trafficking. The Russian government, however, knowingly supports a regime that is notorious for trafficking, and does so unapologetically.

Human trafficking, therefore, represents another means through which Russia can assert its dominance over Moldova. Due to the fact that Transnistria lies within Moldovan territory, the Moldovan government is essentially responsible for the breakaway region’s behavior. With the

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Kara, 119.

Russian government and military protecting Transnistrian territory, however, Moldova cannot effectively police the area. This, in turn, means that the security of the Moldovan state remains at risk, as does the security of the entire Eastern European region. Moreover, because many of its citizens are sold into slavery through deceitful means, Moldova does not have the ability to continue to steadily grow in global markets, largely because the state is working with depleted human capital resources. With such a small and depleted economy, Moldova must turn to Russia to expand markets and resources. Therefore, it seems apparent that the Russian government understands this principle, and thus uses trafficking in Transnistria as a subtle way in which it can continue to exploit the Moldovan state.

Second Analytical Study Conclusion

By continuing to support a corrupt regime in Transnistria, the Russian government has forced Moldova to remain within the Russian sphere of influence. The money made in the breakaway region makes it a valuable asset to the Russian government. Additionally, because a large percentage of the Transnistrian population is of Russian ethnicity, much of the money made in the breakaway state flows into Russian state-owned assets. Shady business deals and money laundering (both are commonplace in Transnistria) ensure easy money for citizens, and export to Russia proves relatively simple.⁷⁷ The Kremlin thus understands that trafficking acts as a means to keep Moldova from joining the European sphere of influence.

Several statements emanating from Brussels have indicated a need for Moldova to address the problem of trafficking within its borders. If Moldova wishes to facilitate broader cooperation with Europe, officials have expressed a need for the government to fight corruption

⁷⁷ Hans Belcsak, "Hot Spots: Moldova," *Business Credit* 105, no. 5 (2003): 53.

and trafficking, and thus, change Moldova's image abroad.⁷⁸ The government has a struggle ahead if it wishes to effectively combat trafficking, especially given the fact that Moldova currently ranks as a Tier 3 state on the CIA's rating scale for instability (Tier 3 being the highest rating).⁷⁹ With the Transnistrian dilemma unresolved, however, this will prove extremely difficult for the Moldovan government, especially due to the fact that the breakaway region now functions as a major trafficking highway. Therefore, if Russia continues to support the Transnistrian regime, European integration for Moldova will remain unlikely due to the steady flow of goods being trafficked out of the region. As trafficking continues in the region, the Moldovan government's and people's aims of somewhat deeper cooperation within the European domain will remain a distant—or even impossible—realization.

The example of government-backed trafficking demonstrates several reasons why the Realist paradigm remains relevant in today's international relations analyses. Support for trafficking has implications for regional security, as well for the balance of power in the area. The Russian government sustains a Russian presence in Transnistria in order to keep Moldova within its sphere of influence. As long as the territory's status remains unresolved, Moldova will be forced to negotiate and deal with a supremely powerful Russian government and military. Furthermore, by allowing trafficking and smuggling to occur within the confines of Moldovan territory, the Russian government makes it extremely difficult for the Moldovan state to integrate fully within the European domain. This struggle for increased regional influence proves that Realism remains an important paradigm in the post-Cold War era. In addition, the sale of weapons to conflict regions creates major challenges for global security, which proves an

⁷⁸ Republic of Moldova, "Moldova's Wish of European Integration is a Legal One, Josette Durrieu Says," August 12, 2008, <http://www.moldova.md/en/news/1211/1/2865/> (accessed February 2, 2009).

⁷⁹ U.S. CIA, "The World Factbook – Moldova," February 24, 2009, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/md.html> (accessed February 27, 2009).

important consideration within the context of the Realist archetype. As long as state actors continue to dictate policy decisions, Realism will remain applicable in current examinations of international relations.

An Overarching Conclusion: Assessing Commonalities between the Two Analytical Studies

In the two analytical studies assessed throughout this project, several common conclusions arise. Firstly, it is important to note that Moldova will have an extremely difficult time integrating within the European and Western spheres because of the state's position near Russia. Whether the Russian government is enabling trafficking to occur, banning Moldovan imports, reducing gas supplies, or suspending treaty obligations, the Moldovan government does not have the ability to make important decisions without the threat of negative repercussions emanating from Moscow. Indeed, the instability of the Moldovan state will ensure that future policy decisions remain extremely difficult to formulate.

Trafficking remains one of the most important tools with which Russia can continue to dominate the Moldovan state. Much in the same way that banning Moldovan imports decreases the chances of Moldovan integration with the EU (because of its struggling economy), trafficking also hurts any potential EU integration, because the EU does not want instability within its territory. Similarly, reducing the levels of gas that flow into Moldova hurt the state's economy and image. As a result of the faltering Moldovan economy, many Moldovan women and men are tricked into "money making" opportunities that actually result in them being sold into a modern form of slavery. Furthermore, when the Russian government suspended its treaty obligations to remove its troops from Transnistria, it assured that a Russian presence would remain on the ground in the territory. That, in turn, assures that illegal weapons and human

trafficking can continue in the region for years to come. These interconnected issues likely ensure that instability remains at the root of all of Moldova's problems in the foreseeable future.

Indeed, the overarching theme that arises in both analytical studies is instability. Whether its political, economic, territorial, or trafficking-related, instability serves as the key mechanism to ensure that Moldova remains within the Russian sphere of influence. As the Russian government continues to seek policies and initiatives aimed at degrading the Moldovan state, it is likely that any desires for broader cooperation with Europe will remain distant pipe dreams. By enacting trade bans, opposing EU expansion, cutting off gas supplies, or acting as a complicit force in the trafficking process, Russia is cultivating instability within Moldova. In turn, Moscow can effectively keep Chisinau within its regional domain.

Applicability of Realism in the Post-Cold War World

Another conclusion of the research is that the Realist paradigm for analyzing international relations remains an important consideration for scholars. After the end of the Cold War, many scholars believed that the ideas of balance of power, regional stability, and states acting as the most important decision-makers would fade. The two analytical studies presented, however, demonstrate that in this region of the world, spheres of influence are expanding, and states and multi-state institutions are still looking to spread their ideologies. These actors are using smaller states as ideological battlegrounds, much in the way that the Cold War powers did. Thus, even in the post-Cold War world, Realism remains applicable as an international relations theory.

One should note that some of the facets of Realist theory have shifted slightly, however. Indeed, during the Cold War, most disputes and sources of instability arose out of state-versus-state confrontations. With the demise of the Cold War, however, instability has largely become a

byproduct of transnational issues (such as trafficking). While some would argue that this demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the Realist paradigm, this paper suggests the complete opposite. By focusing on the fact that a state (Russia in this instance) has openly assisted a corrupt regime in Transnistria, and has in turn facilitated a situation in which trafficking can negatively influence the sovereignty of another state, this paper demonstrates the validity of Realist theory. States remain extremely important actors and seek to expand their spheres of influence, even if they do so through transnational means. Therefore, Realism still proves an important theory in assessing international relations.

Final Conclusion

Moldova continues to slowly progress in the economic and political sectors. As the state continues to look increasingly westward for direction in these areas, it risks provoking Russian aggression. With an uncertain future, the small country faces many tough questions. However, if the Moldovan government can gain the upper hand in its fight against trafficking, and if it can eventually distance itself from the powerful influence of the Russian government, Moldova might become one of Europe's most profound success stories.

In order for real, positive change to continue, the newly re-elected communist party officials must seek broader cooperation with Europe. Whereas their administration had articulated several pro-European policies previously, there is a worry emerging now that the government is creeping back toward Russia in search of political and economic direction. This project is not designed as an argument to disengage with Russia completely. On the contrary, constructive cooperation with Moscow is essential to ensure diversified growth. It seems clear, however, that positive change will only occur with a set of policies that look increasingly toward the EU and other Western states, rather than relying on older, less progressive allies. Moldova

has been stuck in neutral (and at times, has shifted into reverse) far too often when formulating policy. By seeking slow and progressive economic and political growth, while also enhancing cooperative efforts designed at combating trafficking and smuggling, Moldova can finally begin to emerge from the region's doldrums. In short, the path leading to the present state of affairs has proven difficult, but significant opportunities for progress are at Moldova's disposal and the country must now be willing to grasp them.

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