Democracy, sovereignty, and security: understanding the normative approaches of third parties involved in the conflicts in Moldova and Ukraine

Ana Maria Albulescu*

Romanian Centre for Russian Studies, Institute for Research, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania

This article compared the process of political settlement in Transnistria and the Donbass region. This comparison ultimately serves toward understanding the following question: What constitute the fundamental differences between historical interpretations of the principles of international order by external parties involved in the design of peace agreements in Moldova and Ukraine and how did this influence their implementation? In analyzing this complex context, this article therefore looks at two major proposals for political settlement in Transnistria—the Kozak Memorandum (2003) and the Yushchenko plan (2005) and the Minsk Agreements (2014/2015) in the Donbass. It focuses on the interpretation of the principles of democracy, sovereignty, and security that have been included in the design of these externally sponsored peace agreements toward providing a conceptual framework for understanding the broader normative approaches of third parties involved in the conflicts in Moldova and Ukraine. It informs an analysis of the role of peace and democracy as foundations of the Liberal International Order.

KEYWORDS

sovereignty, democracy, security, international order, norms

Introduction

The post-Cold War international order has been dominated by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the re-organization of the European Security Order with the transformation of the CSCE (Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe) into the current OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe). In Eastern Europe, it has also meant a transition from communism to new projects of national identification that have often assumed membership of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the European Union. For countries of the former Soviet Bloc, the processes of disintegration and national identity formation have often assumed violent struggles with national minorities seeking self-determination and independence. Russia and the West have found themselves in the constant negotiation of the principles of the postwar international order: sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as a battle to define what the democratic norms of the new post-Cold War order entail. These trends have influenced the resolution of conflicts on the European continent with the OSCE becoming heavily involved in conflict resolution and mediation in countries from the former Soviet Union such as Moldova and Ukraine. On the other hand, Russia, a member of this organization, has sustained a parallel process of conflict management, more favorable to its national interests that has often come into clash with the provisions and norms supported by the West.

A long history of unresolved conflicts in Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, and more recently, Donetsk and Luhansk have thus developed since the breakup of the Soviet Union, thus leading to tensions between Russia and the West. The above-mentioned conflicts stand out through their endurance as well as through the implications for the neighboring states involved in either supporting or condemning separatists. Challenges to sovereignty that underpin secessionist demands in the separatist regions have nevertheless taken multiple forms. These forms include recurring violence but also continued inflamed political rhetoric and the repeated organization of parallel elections that seek to contest the legitimacy of central governments (Albulescu, 2021). Occasionally, flaring up into violence—as the most recent escalation in Ukraine illustrates—each of the conflicts between the recognized states and the separatists that are challenging their authority represents a threat not only to the states that are required to deal with secessionist movements but also to the principles of international order on which the European security architecture has been based.

In some of these conflicts, attempts at mediation and the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements by third parties have been made. In the Republic of Moldova, this included both the Kozak Memorandum proposed by Russia and the Mediators Document proposed by the OSCE between 2003 and 2004, followed by the Yushchenko Plan in 2005. In the case of the conflicts in the Donbass region between Ukraine and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, after the 2014 conflict the Minsk Process sought to achieve a similar aim. In the cases of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, which all experienced a more frequent resurgence of violence, mediators have unlike in the first three cases often returned to the negotiation of ceasefires and security arrangements rather than a political settlement. This article is therefore concerned with the first set of cases that stand out as attempts by third-party mediators to design a political settlement for post-Soviet separatist conflicts. The research is guided by the question: What constitute the fundamental differences between historical interpretations of the principles of international order by external parties involved in the design of peace agreements in this case and how did this interpretation influence their implementation?

Methodology and case study selection

Methodologically, this article follows the method of structured focused comparison (George and Bennett, 2005) in dealing with cases from Moldova and Ukraine. The case studies have been selected to include peace agreements by third-party mediators involved in conflict resolution in Moldova and Ukraine. In this sense, they have been selected to include a most-similar case comparison between initiatives toward political settlement. The method of structured focused comparison allows for distinguishing the normative basis on which third-party mediators have acted in each case of similar political settlement initiatives by isolating the differences in the behavior of third parties with regard to the principles of sovereignty, democracy, and security.

Structure, argument, and contributions

It is thus particularly important to assess the way in which third-party mediation in the post-Cold War era—with particular reference to the cases of Transnistria, Donetsk, and Luhansk—has addressed the respect and consolidation of principles such as sovereignty and democracy. This is of utmost importance if considering debates arising in the context of the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine with regard to the means of settling these separatist disputes and whether views that negotiated settlements in these cases have been broadly accepted as the only option. More generally, some might argue that the liberal international order can and should sometimes be upheld through the use of force and not only via negotiated settlements.

Understanding the normative basis of different political settlements proposed to resolve the conflicts in Transnistria (the Kozak Memorandum and the Yushchenko Plan) and Donetsk and Luhansk (the Minsk Agreement) as well as the geopolitical context in which they have been proposed thus represents this article's principal contributions. Thus, this article is concerned with the content of these agreements, the historical context in which they have been proposed and the views that the specific third party proposing this settlement has held with regard to the principles of sovereignty and democracy at a particular point in time. In the first section, each of the three agreements will be discussed to take into account these aspects. The second section will then provide a comparative assessment of the views that third-party mediators have developed with regard to the principles of security, sovereignty, and democracy and the way in which they have underpinned the means to achieving peace as part of negotiations toward political settlements in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

This article argues that the involvement of third parties in proposing the Kozak Memorandum, the Yushchenko Plan, and the Minsk Agreement shows an important distinction between the normative positions that Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE/The Trilateral Contact Group have been developed. Russia has favored the contestation of the liberal international order by proposing security provisions that favored the gradual withdrawal of its troops from Moldova, the primacy of self-determination principle in negotiating solutions, and not least the recognition of elections organized in de facto states. Ukraine, on the other hand, has supported the consolidation of the liberal international order, the complete demilitarization of the conflict zone in Transnistria, and the organization of internationally recognized elections within the borders of the recognized state. Finally, the OSCE, both as part of the 5 plus 2 negotiation framework in Moldova and the Trilateral Contact Group in Ukraine, has proposed solutions in support of the liberal international order and its underlining principles as well as complete demilitarization of the conflict zones and the democratization of de facto states and organization of internationally recognized elections within the borders of the recognized state.

The theoretical contribution of this article is to a growing literature on conflicts involving de facto states (Kolstø, 2006; Caspersen, 2011; Berg, 2012; Albulescu, 2021; Blakkisrud, 2023) and addresses one important aspect of conflict resolution, namely, its external dimension. In this sense, it provides an original conceptual framework for understanding the behavior of third-party mediators

in respect to the principles of sovereignty, democracy, and security. Empirically, this article provides knowledge about three distinctive cases of peace settlements proposed in Moldova and Ukraine and the role that the normative perspectives of specific third-party mediators such as Russia and the OSCE have played in the design of these settlements. This can provide the basis for future research into the role that external actors play in unresolved conflicts in the post-Soviet space, opening up space for research that deals specifically with the power of norms in influencing such roles.

State of the art

As core principles, the protection of effective and sovereign states which maintain a monopoly on the means of violence and the ability to enforce and guarantee liberal rights, rules, and decisions as well as a welfare component has represented one of the features of the post-Cold War international system (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999). Considering this aspect, a long-term concern remains in International Relations with the capacity to sustain at normative and practical levels the cooperation of states through a rule-based international setting, institutionalized through a multilateral, international order regulated by international law (Ikenberry, 2018a,b; Lake et al., 2021). In the context of unresolved post-Soviet conflicts, the choice of upholding or contesting these principles as part of negotiations toward political settlements often has a severe impact on the dynamics of conflict between the parties and the broader geopolitical competition between interested third parties involved in the resolution.

Looking at the principles of sovereignty and self-determination in relation to the process of secession, Pavcovic and Radan note that:

> Secession is at present regarded as the ultimate assertion of sovereignty of a national group or groups over the territory which they inhabit. It is by virtue of its right to national self-determination that a national group usually claims sovereignty over that territory. As it has the right to govern itself, a national group has the right to establish a sovereign state on the territory on which it resides. Secession is thus an assertion of the superiority of both territorial sovereignty and national determination principles over any other political or ethical principles of political organisation. In the assertion of the right to secede, the principle of national self-determination justifies the assertion of territorial sovereignty for a particular national group (Pavkovic and Radan, 2003, p. 7).

This is thus in strict connection to the principle of security that the current international order promotes, namely, one that is based on the non-intervention principle of international law. Sovereignty should equal security in this type of international order of sovereign states, with secessionist conflict constituting a threat to this very order.

Democracy on the other hand does not seem to equate the principle of sovereignty. As David Held argues:

> Accordingly, sovereignty involved the assertion by the modern state of independence; that is, of its possession of sole rights to jurisdiction over a particular people and territory.

> And in the world of relations among states, the principle of the sovereign equality of all states gradually became adopted as the paramount principle governing the formal conduct of states towards one another, however representative or unrepresentative were their particular regimes. (Held, 1992)

Focusing on the principles of international order allows for a better understanding of the relationship between external actors and primary parties to the conflict. Any understanding of the roles that third-party mediators have played in Moldova and Ukraine should begin with a broader analysis of the roles that such actors have in negotiating political settlements in intra-state conflicts. The question of third-party mediation has involved additional dilemmas regarding the particular bias that a specific actor might hold toward the parties involved in a conflict (Marandici, 2022). The specific principles that have been exhibited in the peace proposals by third parties this article argues are related to the specific bias that such parties have had toward the conflicting sides. In analyzing the factors underpinning a particular mediation process, the literature has identified a series of aspects that matter for the success and failure of a particular proposal. Among these, this article highlights mediator characteristics and identity as paramount (Bercovitch and Houston, 2000). This is particularly important if considering that all three peace agreements discussed in this paper can be considered failures of third-party mediation. If looking closer at their underpinning principles, it is thus clear that such failure has arisen from the specific relationship developed between third parties and the conflicting sides based on the belief in the principles espoused in the proposals. As Bercovitch and Houston argue:

> An alternative way to identify the power and influence of a mediator is to examine the mediator's relationship in the international system, specifically the previous relationship of the mediator with the parties. Certain types of relationships (such as political and economic alliances) between a mediator and the parties are conducive to specific types of interventions (…) Factors such as legitimacy, leverage, and authority reside not only with the mediator but also in the type of relationship a mediator has with the parties in conflict. When an ongoing relationship or alliance exists between the mediator and the parties, factors such as common bonds, history, experiences, values, and interests all act to establish a degree of familiarity, rapport, understanding, trust, and acceptability of a mediator. These factors also provide the basis for the use of referent, informational, and legitimate sources of power and influence by the mediator in the conflict (Bercovitch and Houston, 2000, p. 181).

If looking closer at their underpinning principles, it is thus clear that such failure has arisen from the specific relationship developed between third parties and the conflicting sides based on the belief in the principles espoused in the proposals.

Focusing on the provisions and principles of peace agreements proposed for the settlement of unresolved conflicts in Moldova and Ukraine thus presents us with the external and internal dimensions of empirical analysis that assumes the interaction at normative level between third parties and primary parties in conflict based on the agreements proposed. What is at stake here is understanding the

interplay between these two dimensions and the way in which norms have shaped the content of these peace agreements.

The Kozak memorandum: provisions and principles

In 2003, when the Kozak[1] Memorandum was proposed, the issues of self-determination and therefore the negotiation of sovereign rights not just in the post-Soviet space but elsewhere in the Balkans were being decided on an *ad hoc* basis with the view of promoting two of the principles of the liberal international order, namely, the respect for sovereignty and democracy. These two principles had become inextricably linked with the idea that in order to be recognized by the community of the state, democracy rather than status has to take priority. The primacy of the "democratization before status" as an example of the strategy of the international community to address internal conflicts as illustrated by the Kosovo example (Tansey, 2007) had at that point in time not influenced the conflicts in the post-Soviet space. With the exceptions of the conflicts in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh that had each brought about various degrees of involvement of the United Nations in its capacity as a mediator (MacFarlane, 2000), the rest of secessionist conflicts in the post-Soviet space—the Transnistrian conflict included—were falling under the remit of the OSCE as the primary organization tasked with finding political solution. The OSCE had in the aftermath of the Cold War been the primary organization responsible for European security, where Russia could be engaged in discussing matters of interest for the security of countries formerly belonging to the Soviet Union.

The OSCE, Russia, and the principles of sovereignty and democracy and security

The OSCE-led mission that had sought between 1993 and 2003 to address the root causes of the conflict through either providing a special status for Transnistria or providing the basis for federalization (Freire, 2017). While Russia had adhered to most of the provisions that had been included in the negotiation process up to that point in time, there were indeed frictions produced between Russia and the Republic of Moldova following the commitments of the 1999 Istanbul Summit toward the demilitarization of the Transnistrian region that has by 2003 prevented the OSCE mission to find a solution to the conflict (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 2000), nevertheless bringing to the forefront of the negotiation process an alternative political settlement plan proposed by Dmitry Kozak. The Kozak Memorandum addressed the principle of sovereignty by proposing the federalization of the Republic of Moldova with both Transnistria and Gagauzia being subjects of the Federation (Hill, 2012).

A second aspect that merits attention refers to the principle of democratization and the way in which it has underpinned the provisions of the Kozak Memorandum as well as the approaches taken by Russian politicians and negotiators as part of the conflict settlement process. First, the Kozak Memorandum provided for the Republic of Moldova to be a "democratic, constitutional federal state" (Hill, 2012). In terms of the power-sharing provisions that had been included in the memorandum, had it been signed the constitutional changes that it foresaw would have provided for a calendar for the organizations of elections for the Senate by "no later than the 1st of February 2005," for the House of Representatives by "no later than the 30th of April 2005," and for the President "by no later than 31st of May 2005" (Hill, 2012). When analyzed by comparison to all of the other proposals that have been initiated in the negotiation process to which Russia had adhered up to that point (e.g., The Moscow Memorandum), an important change can be observed with the inclusion of the idea of democracy as well as the clarity of provisions for the settlement of the conflict through elections. Indeed in 1997 when the Moscow Memorandum had been put forward, however, the primacy of a solution that respects the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova as Russia's acceptable outcome in the Republic of Moldova had only left room for a formula that proposed the establishment of "the framework of a common state within the borders of the Moldavian SSR as of January 1990" (The Republic of Moldova, 1997).

From principle to practice: the lack of implementation of the Kozak Memorandum

The lack of implementation of the Kozak Memorandum had particular consequences both for the primary parties—The Republic of Moldova and Transnistria but also for the involvement of other interested third parties in the conflict resolution process—the primary example being Ukraine. But, first, it is important to note how the primary parties reacted to the failure of the Kozak Memorandum. On the eve of the signing of this proposal, Vladimir Voronin[2] decided to reject the 23rd of November draft proposed by Kozak. Vladimir Voronin had committed himself to a national unitary project and the consolidation of a sovereign nation-state (Henry and Miscoiu, 2015) A series of aspects thus contributed to the rejection—a time that would have otherwise been favorable to the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict. This article draws attention to the domestic context of the political scene of the Republic of Moldova. With federalization plans having dominated Voronin's term, political opposition forces were already against the Kozak Memorandum, with protests being organized in Chisinau in order to deter the signing of the Agreement (Demidetsky, 2003). These political reactions produced in Moldova in the following years a series of internal proposals for conflict resolution, among which the most famous one is the 3D Strategy, standing for Democratization, Demilitarization, and Decriminalization (Taranu and Gribincea, 2004)—which sought to bring together exactly the most sensitive aspects in Moldovan society at the time with regard to Transnistria: the fact that it was viewed as antidemocratic, a hub for criminal activity and a threat to the Moldovan territory due to the stationing of the Russian 14th Army on its territory.

---

1   Dmitry Kozak was the Russian official responsible for the negotiations for the Transnistrian settlement.

2   Vladimir Voronin was the President of the Republic of Moldova between 2001 and 2009.

A second aspect that deserves attention refers to the reactions produced in Transnistria with regard to the Kozak Memorandum. There was perhaps an understanding in the separatist state at the time that any proposal that would be favorable for peace in the vision of its leadership would have to satisfy one of the conflict-long grievances related to its independence, with President Igor Smirnov[3] pointing out that the failure of all of the peace plans that had so far been proposed for resolution had come from the fact that the underpinning idea in them was that the Republic of Moldova had always been offering Transnistria concessions rather than treating it as an equal (Smirnov, 2004).

It is this particular clash of ideas that is interesting. First, whereas the federal plan proposed by Kozak had sought to negotiate sovereignty between the two subjects, it had not achieved on the one hand the degree of power equality sought by Transnistria and on the other the security guarantees sought by Moldova, which had long been concerned with the issue of demilitarization. Second, one should not elude the context in which this plan had been proposed and the specific issue of democratization. Looking back to 2003 at both the discourses and practices of international relations more broadly but also the regional and local contexts the fight between democracy and autocracy emerges as a global theme both in the context of the war in Iraq, the struggle of post-communist countries such as Romania and Bulgaria to join the European Union and NATO, and the ambitious project of European states at the time to deliver on their enlargement strategy to the east (Nastase, 2001). This international context was posing questions for what types of states—if any—would ever be recognized by the international community, conditioning such a form of international legitimacy on the idea that they would have to build a democratic political community (Gardner, 2011).[4]

The next section of this article takes into account these broader international trends to look in detail at a second political settlement proposal as well as how this can be interpreted in terms of the principles of the liberal international order.

The Yushchenko Plan: provisions and principles

Apart from the fact that under its provision, the Yushchenko[5] Plan assumed that it would achieve a special status for Transnistria—a difference from the Kozak Memorandum—one of the most interesting aspects of the Yushchenko plans by comparison to the Kozak Memorandum is the fact that it insisted on the idea of a democratic political order that would include Transnistria a special administrative territorial unit by providing a unique calendar for this to be achieved, one that has as it this article will show led to the implementation of its first stage by the Republic of Moldova. First, it is important to consider the three stages proposed

by the Yushchenko Plan. In the first stage, the plan assumed that: "a) In order to create prerequisites for the restoration of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, (no later than July 2005) adopts the Law of the Republic of Moldova on the main provisions of the status of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova (Transdniestria)" (Ukraine Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). This stage also stipulated that Transnistria would retain its right to secede under this law (Ukraine Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). Finally, the second stage proposed the "distribution of competencies and powers between the central authorities of the Republic of Moldova and the authorities of Transnistria" and the "adoption of the Law of the Republic of Moldova on the special legal status of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova (Transnistria) while a third stage in the plan would have seen the final resolution of the Transnistrian conflict" (Ukraine Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005).

Ukraine's role as mediator: defending sovereignty and promoting democracy

This plan was proposed by Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko that had come to power in Ukraine following the elections in 2004 and what is now widely known as the Orange Revolution (Lejins and Latvijas arpolitikas instituts, 2006). Prior to proposing this initiative, Ukraine had been involved in the official settlement process since 1993 as an official international guarantor (Neukirch, 2001). Ukraine had by 2003 officially been supportive of international efforts to resolve the conflict either through the OSCE or by supporting the positions of the Russian Federation. For example, in November 2003 at the time of the discussions regarding the Kozak Memorandum, the position of the Ukrainian Embassy in the Republic of Moldova with regard to the Transnistrian conflict revolved around several points. First, Ukraine considered that with regard to the political settlement of the Transnistrian problem, more efforts of the world community should be directed toward convincing the parties (Moldova and Transnistria) that they need to build a truly federal state (Țăranu and Gribincea, 2012). Second, the position on demilitarization was that its completion could "contribute to a shift in emphasis from a military guarantee operation to an international police presence, since in the event of a military guarantee operation the presence of Russian peacekeepers is inevitable" (Țăranu and Gribincea, 2012). Third, if looking at one of the clauses included both in the Yushchenko plan regarding the possibility of secession by Transnistria, it is not surprising that Ukraine's position at the time regarding Moldova's neighbor—Romania—was that "reaching an understanding that Romania (an unsuccessful ally of the Moldovan authorities in 1992) will not be a consultant on the Transnistrian issue (as was the case in 2001 with the Romanian chairmanship of the OSCE)" (Țăranu and Gribincea, 2012). Finally, any resolution of the conflict was viewed in light of the possibility of the European Union to grant the Republic of Moldova the status of Associate Member in order to hurry the process of finding a solution (Țăranu and Gribincea, 2012).

---

3   Igor Smirnov was the war-time leader of Transnistria and its first de facto president between 1991 and 2001.

4   This aspect is specifically related to the recognition of Kosovo and the "standards before status" approach of the international community (Gardner, 2011).

5   Viktor Yushchenko was Ukrainian President between 2005 and 2010.

The partial implementation of the Yushchenko plan

In 2005, this approach toward the democratization of Transnistria was also adopted by the Republic of Moldova that adopted the "Special Law on the Status of Transnistria" (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 2005). What the implementation of the Yushchenko Plan meant in practice through the adoption of this law was that the Republic of Moldova was promoting the principle of democracy through what it viewed as the international linchpin of the democratic international liberal order in Europe, namely, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, which were supposed to monitor elections organized in Transnistria (Parlamentul Republicii Moldova, 2005, p. 873). The nuances in the public narratives are worth noting. The public discourse of Vladimir Voronin had changed to embody its pro-European politics while the notion of democracy that Transnistria adhered to was influenced by the appearance on the political scene in Tiraspol of new opposition parties (Albulescu, 2021). In the end, this particular context again led to the lack of implementation of the Yushchenko plan, and in turn, a unilateral referendum was organized by Transnistria (Xinhua News Agency, 2006), without any clear basis as had been stipulated by the plan—of the potential of the Republic of Moldova to unite with different countries.

This particular agreement poses questions regarding the way in which Ukraine had acted since 2014 when separatism in the Donbass region challenged its sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also poses questions with regard to the way in which Russia and the signatories of the Minsk agreement have clashed over the defense of the principles and institutions of the liberal international order.

The Minsk agreement: provisions and principles

After almost 6 months of fighting in the Donbass in 2014, the first signs of a dialogue between Ukraine and the separatists are brought about by the signing of the peace consultations on the 5th of September 2014 (Minsk I) at the initiative of the Trilateral Contact Group, which was formed by representatives of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and the OSCE. With this occasion, the parties propose an immediate ceasefire, the monitoring of the OSCE of the "regime of non-weapons" and not least with regard to possible mechanisms of addressing the issue of self-determination in Donetsk and Luhansk to "implement decentralization of power, including by means of enacting the Law of Ukraine with respect to the temporary status of local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and the Luhansk regions" (Law on Special Status) (Trilateral Contact Group, 2014). The Minsk peace processes that began with this dialogue sought a comprehensive solution to the conflict, not only through dealing with the aspect of sovereignty in similar ways that had been sought in Transnistria, for example, through the granting of autonomy but also through addressing the issue of elections in the separatist territories. Not only would the rights of minorities be recognized through the Law on Special Status, but the organization of early elections in the two regions would guarantee that a democratic political order could be built

in the aftermath of war. Indeed, the document agreed upon by the Trilateral Contact Group called for "the holding of early local elections in accordance with the Law of Ukraine" based on the respect of the temporary status of local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and the Luhansk regions (Law on Special Status) (Trilateral Contact Group, 2014). This law was passed on by the Ukrainian Parliament on the 16th of September 2014, having granted people in Donetsk and Luhansk their own rights such as, for example, the right to use whatever language they considered native. Beyond the content of this legislation, what is of interest for this article is the temporary nature of this legislation (Parliament of Ukraine, 2014).

The fact that the legislation has been extended several times prior to the current conflict shows that the issue of sovereignty was addressed through constantly postponing the issue of self-determination up to the point on the 2nd of February 2022 when the two republics' independence was recognized by the Russian Federation (President of the Russian Federation, 2022a,b). Keeping the status quo for 8 years meant that in practice the Minsk Process had undergone a series of interventions—both through its further development into a Package of Measures for Implementation as part of Minsk II in 2015 (Trilateral Contact Group, 2015) and more recently through the re-affirming of the main parties commitment to it as part of the Normandy Format (The Russian Federation, 2019). Commitments within these frameworks were nevertheless meant to defend the principles of the liberal international order—namely, sovereignty and democracy through means that did not allow neither for the recognition of separatists' demands and acceptance of the two republics into the international community, nor for the full resolution of the conflict as they did remain at the level of a ceasefire agreement rather than a comprehensive political solution.

The Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, for example, assumed the full demilitarization of the conflict zone through the "withdrawal of heavy weapons by the OSCE from the day 1 of the withdrawal, using all technical equipment necessary, including satellites, drones, radar equipment, etc." as well as "withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring of the OSCE" and "disarmament of all illegal groups." (Trilateral Contact Group, 2015, p. 2) These measures have not been implemented, and as this article argues, the current conflict in Ukraine has its roots in a context of incomplete secession (Albulescu, 2021) that has been maintained over the past 8 years either through the breaking of ceasefire agreements and contestation through the politics of secession as illustrated by the organization of elections in the two provinces in 2021 (Eastern Donbas: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report, 2022).

Russia, the Trilateral Contact Group, and the principles of sovereignty, democracy, and security

This article looks at the design of the Minsk Agreements and the peace process that it had set in motion and makes several observations. First, with regard to the proponents of the agreements, one can note the *ad hoc* format in which these

agreements were negotiated as compared to the post-Cold War initiatives of the OSCE. This being said, the main provisions in Minsk II mirror the position of the OSCE in the Transnistrian conflict settlement, namely, the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the Donbass and the organization of local elections in accordance with Ukrainian legislation. The Trilateral Contact Group in Ukraine was just like the OSCE in Moldova aiming to therefore defend the principles of sovereignty and democracy, and its approach to maintaining security in Ukraine was based on these clear aims. Russia, on the other hand, though involved in the negotiations for a ceasefire actively supported the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, ultimately recognizing both the results of the elections in Donetsk and Luhansk and the two referenda organized in the separatist regions (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). Indeed as William Hill notes with regard to that specific period, Russia's foreign policy was dominated by the idea that the international order is transitioning from a unipolar order to a polycentric one with global power shifting toward the East. The priorities identified in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation in 2013 thus included countries from the former Soviet space as specific regional interests as well as references to the threats of global American interventionism (Hill, 2018).

The failure of the Minsk Agreement and the current escalation of the conflict in Ukraine

The recent escalation in Ukraine only shows the way in way in which Russia had defeated the logic of the West's dealings with Russia in the post-Soviet space that was based on the idea of defending the principles of the international order established post-1945 and consolidated in the aftermath of the Cold War. Such strategy was clear in the aims of preserving the territorial integrity of Ukraine even in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea and the eruption of separatist conflict in the East in 2014. The Minsk Agreement unlike the agreements proposed in Transnistria was markedly less developed in terms of provisions only setting out the main lines of negotiations between the parties. It was opposed by a clear policy of contestation on behalf of the separatist states developing for a period of 8 years through new institutionalization processes supported by Moscow [(International Crisis Group (ICG), 2016)]. Measures that were part of this support prior to the official recognition by Russia included financial support for pensions and salaries of Russian personnel tasked with running public local government institutions in Donetsk and Luhansk as well as social benefits [(International Crisis Group (ICG), 2016)].

The normative approaches of third parties involved in the conflicts in Moldova and Ukraine toward international order and its principles

The normative approaches of third parties involved in the unresolved conflicts in Moldova and Ukraine differ on a wide range of issues. Motivated both by self-interest and values, it is important to understand what the approaches of external actors indicate in terms of the means through which they act in respect to security, sovereignty, and democracy. Toward this aim, this article proposes a conceptual framework that distinguishes between the normative settings in which third parties had acted and the specific policies that they have promoted as part of the peace agreements discussed in this paper. As exemplified in Table 1, this article argues that between 2003 and 2015 the main divisions between proponents of agreements in the cases of Moldova and Ukraine have been the normative setting in which they have been designed. The following three sections elaborate on the positions expressed by third parties with regard to the Kozak, Yushchenko, and Minsk Agreements.

As shown in Table 1, this article argues that the involvement of third parties in proposing the Kozak Memorandum, the Yushchenko Plan, and the Minsk Agreement shows an important distinction between the normative positions that Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE/The Trilateral Contact Group have developed. Russia has favored the contestation of the liberal international order by proposing security provisions that favored the gradual withdrawal of its troops from Moldova, the primacy of the self-determination principle in negotiating solutions, and not least the recognition of elections organized in de facto states. Ukraine, on the other hand, has supported the consolidation of the liberal international order, the complete demilitarization of the conflict zone in Transnistria, and the organization of internationally recognized elections within the borders of the recognized state. Finally, the OSCE in particular both as part of the 5 plus 2 negotiation framework in Moldova and the Trilateral Contact Group in Ukraine has proposed solutions in support of the liberal international order and its underlining principles as well as complete demilitarization of the conflict zones and the democratization of de facto states and organization of internationally recognized elections within the borders of the recognized state.

The OSCE/The Trilateral Contact Group

The OSCE/The Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format have all supported externally designed peace solutions respecting and promoting the territorial integrity of Moldova and Ukraine. When it comes to security, the tendency of external mediators has been to encourage the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Moldova and Ukraine as a precondition for the resolution of the conflicts. This was specifically obvious in the Mediators Document proposed for Transnistria in 2002 (OSCE, 2004) as well as the Minsk Agreement as illustrated above. Finally when it comes to democratization, the mediators have been adamant that a solution to these unresolved conflicts can only be found through the democratization of the de facto states and the organization of elections within the boundaries of the recognized states. For example in the case of the Minsk Agreements by 2021, the deadlock in the proposed accord of which the OSCE was part of, came from the different interpretations by the parties of the steps needed to be taken toward implementation. In effect, Ukraine was insisting on the full demilitarization of the territory and the passing of a law for more autonomy for the regions, followed by elections. In contrast, the separatists' position was that the withdrawal of Russian forces from these territories would only occur after the full

TABLE 1 Normative approaches of third parties involved in the conflicts in Moldova and Ukraine.

	OSCE/Trilateral Contact Group/The Normandy Format	Russia	Ukraine
Normative settings	Defense of liberal international order	Contestation of liberal international order	Consolidation of liberal international order
Security	Full demilitarization	Gradual demilitarization	Full demilitarization
Sovereignty	Primacy of territorial integrity	Primacy of self-determination	Primacy of territorial integrity
Democracy	Democratization of de facto states/internationally recognized elections within the borders of the recognized state	Recognition of de facto states' electoral processes	Internationally recognized elections within the borders of the recognized state

implementation of the protocols, meaning the granting of autonomy to the territories (Rasiulis, 2021). The support for this position in the wake of the escalation of the war in Ukraine is made clear by the statements of representatives of the Trilateral Contact Group emphasizing the need to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine as key to the implementation of the Agreement. The statement of France at the UN following the meeting of political advisors in the Normandy format welcomed the readiness of Ukraine to pass "outstanding legislation" required for the implementation of the Minsk Agreement while condemning Russia's calls to recognize the two separatist republics (Permanent Delegation of France to the United Nations, 2022).

The tendency toward the promotion of democratization by third parties mediators such as the OSCE has been more pronounced in Transnistria rather than in Donetsk and Luhansk due to the longer term existence of the de facto state by comparison. In taking these approaches, however, the two mediating structures have been part of the same normative setting seeking to defend the principles of the liberal international order as agreed in the aftermath of the Second World War that had been strengthened by the end of the Cold War. Such defense first and foremost assumes the prioritization of the principle of territorial integrity over that of the use of force in international relations, leading to the design of externally guaranteed solutions to conflict that favor the reintegration through peaceful means of separatist regions into the territory from which they wish to secede. In operating in this setting, the approach of the OSCE and the Trilateral Contact Group has been typical of the rule-based international order to which the West accords primacy as opposed to the "realpolitik sphere of influence-based international order" that Russia seeks to promote (Rasiulis, 2021, p. 3).

Russia

Russia, on the other hand, has been involved in a continued process of contesting the post-1945 international order that has involved means such as the political, economic, and military support for the separatists in Moldova and Ukraine. As Russia has been involved not only in the military conflicts in these countries but also in their resolution, its dual role has allowed it to perform the roles of both patron and mediator in its relation to the de facto states. In Transnistria, for example, Russia has sought through the Kozak Memorandum a gradual demilitarization of the conflict zone by proposing in 2003 the stationing of Russian Peacekeeping troops on the territory of Moldova until 2020 (Hill, 2012).

Taking on both roles mentioned above, Russia's main achievement has been to remain part of the international order

while at the same time performing actions meant to undermining it. Its main normative approach toward these ends has been to legitimize its actions based on the principles of the liberal international order and to predominantly favor the principle of self-determination over that of territorial integrity. In doing so, Russia has not excluded the use of force in defense of self-determination, justifying its actions in Ukraine as the protection of Russian citizens in the Near Abroad. While in both cases Russia has agreed to the withdrawal of its military forces from the territories of Moldova and Ukraine, the implementation of this provision, stipulated in all agreements discussed in this paper, has been problematic. Thus, if looking at Russia's normative approach toward security, it should be noted that the use of force is not excluded and the military presence of Russian forces on the sovereign territory of other countries is considered adamant for achieving stability. Finally, one important aspect should be noted with respect to the principle of democratization and Russia's role in supporting de facto states in the region. It should be mentioned that one of the main reasons for the lack of implementation of the agreements discussed above has been disagreement over the electoral processes in the separatist regions. With the organization of elections as well as other plebiscites in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Transnistria, the legitimizing power offered by the international recognition of these ballots has once again been contested by Russian unilateral recognition as opposed to widespread international condemnation. Russia's main approach to democracy has been to recognize and legitimize the electoral processes organized in de facto states.

Ukraine

Last, but not least, Ukraine's role as a third party involved in the unresolved conflict in Moldova should be accounted for. This comes especially, as Ukraine is forging its own position against Russia in the conflict in the Donbass and parallels can be drawn. In terms of its approach to security, the Ukrainian position has changed throughout the past 30 years from support for the Russian proposals for a solution between 2000 and 2003 (Ryabchikov, 2000) to favor the complete withdrawal of Russian forces from Moldova as exemplified in the Yushchenko plan. This later position has subsequently also been stressed with regard to its own conflict in the East through Ukraine's participation in the Minsk Peace Process. Second, in terms of its normative approach to the principle of sovereignty, Ukraine just like Moldova has always favored the principle of territorial integrity that had been protected by the United Nations through its recognition

of the two countries in the 1990s. Third, when it comes to democracy, Ukraine has favored in Transnistria the organization of elections under international auspices that would confer legitimacy to such processes. In doing so, Ukraine operated under the normative settings of the consolidation of the liberal international order that required re-iteration of its principles through each of the actions taken in the search for a political settlement in Transnistria.

Conclusion

The current context of the Russia–Ukraine war illustrates the importance of third-party mediation in unresolved conflicts in the former Soviet Space. With the failure of the Minsk Peace Process and the escalation on February 24, questions remain with regard to the success of the OSCE and Western mediation in finding comprehensive solutions to self-determination issues in Moldova and Ukraine. The first aspect that merits attention is related to Russia's membership in regional and international organizations that might be tasked with finding a solution to end hostilities. Russia is part of the OSCE which was tasked with upholding the initial ceasefire negotiated in Minsk as well as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The UN has throughout this war remained the ultimate forum where disagreement between Russia and Ukraine has been played out, being nevertheless the only organization that at this point might help de-escalate the war. This being said, another aspect is related to the type of territorial solution that might be negotiated considering the balance of military forces on the ground and the poor record of UN involvement in unresolved conflicts such as the one between Georgia and Abkhazia for example. Last but not least, there is the issue of recognition of the military reality on the ground and the red lines imposed by the de facto separation of the Donbass since 2014. Any solutions that might be negotiated by third parties rely on the defense of the principle of liberal international order and achieve security based on the respect of the sovereignty of the metropolitan state and the respect of democracy. Conceptually, this article has sought to address the record of third-party mediation in Moldova and Ukraine, by looking at the normative positions of these mediators toward security, sovereignty, and democracy as exhibited in the design of peaceful solutions to unresolved conflicts in the two countries. It contributes both to the literature seeking to understand the dynamics of unresolved conflicts in the post-Soviet space and broader debates related to the contestation of the liberal international order. In particular, it brings to light the way in which Russia has enabled and tolerated such form of contestation through the approaches it has taken to resolve the conflicts in Transnistria and the Donbass.

By surveying a period of almost two decades in which peace agreements have been proposed by external mediators to resolve the conflicts in Transnistria and the Donbas, one can observe a broad pattern in which these agreements have increasingly been part of the defense of the principles of sovereignty and democracy of the liberal international order. If in 2003 such agreements benefited from the dialogue between Western liberal democracies and Russia as part of the institutions meant to protect

the security of the European continent such as the OSCE, today one witnesses the breakdown of such multilateral cooperation and diplomacy. For the past two decades, the liberal international order has gradually eroded in the post-Soviet space as a result of the contestation of sovereignty by separatist movements in Moldova and Ukraine. Faced with the question posited at the beginning of this article, one can draw several conclusions. If looking at our cases, it is clear that each of the political settlements proposed by external mediators has sought in one way or another the consolidation of a democratic re-unified state toward the resolution of the secessionist conflicts that they have addressed. The inability, however, to implement the specific timeline for the re-building of institutions that would deliver this specific order has left the recognized states—as we see in the case of Ukraine—far away from having the ability to defending the principles of liberal international order through means other than force when faced with the issue of separatism. Second, if looking at the relationship between democratization as assumed by the political settlement proposals for the resolution of the conflicts in Transnistria and the Donbass and the reality in the de facto states where elections and referenda had taken place in parallel to the negotiation process—only being recognized by the Russian Federation, one important aspect can be noted. While the practices of a democratic state are retained, their ability to deliver on legitimate authority remains limited particularly due to the fact that the issue of what the state should represent, what the legitimate and recognized borders are remains unresolved. Finally if asking whether there a fundamental difference between historical interpretations of the principles of international order by external parties involved in the design of peace agreements in these cases, this article argues that since 2003 to the present day, external mediation has sought to condition the recognition of new states on the respect of democratic principles, coming into clash with the view that the resolution of secessionist conflicts in the region is purely a question of sovereign rights.

Author contributions

AA is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Romanian Centre for Russian Studies, University of Bucharest.

Funding

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

References

Albulescu, A. M. (2021). *Incomplete Secession after Unresolved Conflicts: Political Order and Escalation in the Post-Soviet Space*. London: Routledge.

BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (2000). *Official Accuses Dnestr Region Leaders of Stalling Conflict Settlement. British Broadcasting Corporation*.

Bercovitch, J., and Houston, A. (2000). Why do they do it like this? an analysis of the factors influencing mediation behavior in international conflicts. *J. Conflict Resol.* 44, 170–202. doi: 10.1177/0022002700044002002

Berg, E. (2012). Parent states versus secessionist entities: measuring political legitimacy in Cyprus, Moldova and Bosnia and Hercegovina. *Europe-Asia Stud.* 64, 1271–1296. doi: 10.1080/09668136.2012.698048

Blakkisrud, H. (2023). "Surviving without recognition: de facto states," in *The Routledge Handbook of Self-Determination and Secession*. London: Routledge.

Caspersen, N. (2011). *Unrecognized States: The Struggle for Sovereignty in the Modern International System*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Demidetsky, V. (2003). *'Opposition Demands Rejection of Russian Plan for Dniester rgn.', ITAR-TASS News Agency*.

Deudney, D., and Ikenberry, G. J. (1999). The nature and sources of liberal international order. *Rev. Int. Stud.* 25, 179–196. doi: 10.1017/S0260210599001795

Eastern Donbas: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report (2022). *Freedom House*. Available online at: https://freedomhouse.org/country/eastern-donbas/freedom-world/2022 (Accessed May 29, 2022).

Freire, M. R. (2017). *Conflict and Security in the Former Soviet Union: The Role of the OSCE*. London: Routledge.

Gardner, A.-M. (2011). "Kosovo: "Standards Before Status" and Beyond," in *Democratic Governance and Non-State Actors*, ed A.-M. Gardner (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan US), 45–69.

George, A. L., and Bennett, A. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Held, D. (1992). Democracy: from city-states to a cosmopolitan order?. *Politic. Stud.* 40, 10–39. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.1992.tb01810.x

Henry, V., and Miscoiu, S. (2015). "Political discourses, search for identity and national imagination in the Republic of Moldova," in *The European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood Today: Politics, Dynamics, Perspectives*, eds V. Naumescu and D. Dungaciu (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), 211–248.

Hill, W. H. (2012). "Appendix C: The Kozak Memorandum November 23 Redaction/23/11/2003," in *Russia, the Near Abroad, and the West: Lessons from the Moldova-Transdniestria Conflict* (Washington, D.C. : Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Johns Hopkins University Press), 207–220.

Hill, W. H. (2018). *No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions Since 1989*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 536.

Ikenberry, G. J. (2018a). The end of liberal international order? *Int. Aff.* 94, 7–23. doi: 10.1093/ia/iix241

Ikenberry, G. J. (2018b). Why the liberal world order will survive. *Ethics Int. Affairs* 32, 17–29. doi: 10.1017/S0892679418000072

International Crisis Group (ICG). (2016). *Russia and the Separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Crisis Group Europe and Central Asia Briefi*. Available online at: https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/56b843194.pdf (Accessed November 29, 2022).

Kolstø, P. (2006). The sustainability and future of unrecognized Quasi-States. *J. Peace Res.* 43, 723–740. doi: 10.1177/0022343306068102

Lake, D. A., Martin, L. L., and Risse, T. (2021). Challenges to the liberal order: reflections on international organization. *Int. Organiz.* 75, 225–257. doi: 10.1017/S0020818320000636

Lejins, A., and Latvijas arpolitikas instituts (2006). *The European Union's Eastern Neighbours After the Orange Revolution*. Riga: Latvian Institute of international Affairs.

MacFarlane, S. N. (2000). "Humanitarian action and conflict in the Southern Caucasus : the cases of Abkhazia (Georgia). and Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)," in *CEMOTI, Cahiers d'Études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, 51–64.

Marandici, I. (2022). "Structural bias, polarized mediation and conflict resolution failure: a comparative examination of the disputes in Transnistria and Donbas," in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 1–25.

Nastase, A. (2001). *Romania si viitorul Europei*. Bucuresti: Monitorul Oficial R.A.

Neukirch, C. (2001). Russia and the OSCE- the influence of interested third and disinterested fourth parties on the conflicts in Estonia and Moldova. *JEMIE J. Ethnopolitic. Minor. Issues Europe* 1, 19. Available online at: https://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/redakteure/publications/JEMIE_Datens%C3%A4tze/JEMIE07Neukirch11-07-01.pdf

OSCE (2004). *Proposals and recommendations of the mediators from the OSCE, the Russian Federation, Ukraine with regards to the Transdniestrian settlement (The Mediators Document). CIO.GAL/11/04: OSCE*. Available online at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/4/23585.pdf (accessed January 26, 2022).

Parlamentul Republicii Moldova (2005). "Nr.877Legea Parlamentului Republicii Moldova Nr.173 Cu privire la prevederile de bază ale statutului juridic special al localitătilor din stînga Nistrului (Transnistria)," in *Conflictul Transnistrean Culegere de documente şi materiale. (Culegere de documente şi materiale (1989–2012))*, eds A. Taranu and M. Gribnicea.

Parliament of Ukraine (2014). Про особливий порядок місцевого самоврядування в окремих районах Донецької та Луганської областей. Available online at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1680-18 (accessed May 29, 2022).

Pavkovic, A., and Radan, P. (2003). In pursuit of sovereignty and self-determination: peoples, states and secession in the international order. *Macquarie Law J.* 3.

Permanent Delegation of France to the United Nations (2022). *Joint stakeout by France, Germany, Ireland, Estonia, Albania, Norway and the EU Delegation, France ONU*. Available online at: https://onu.delegfrance.org/we-call-for-the-full-implementation-of-the-minsk-agreements-starting-with-the (Accessed December 18, 2022).

President of the Russian Federation (2022a). 'Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 21.02.2022 № 71 "О признании Донецкой Народной Республики" Available online at: http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202202220002 (accessed February 22, 2022).

President of the Russian Federation (2022b). 'Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 21.02.2022 № 72 "О признании Луганской Народной Республики" Available online at: http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202202220002 (accessed February 22, 2022).

Rasiulis, A. (2021). "Ukraine: At Europe's Strategic Crossroads," in *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*.

Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022). Заявление МИД России о персональных санкциях в отношении представителей СМИ и оборонного лобби Великобритании - Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации. Available online at: https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1817712/ (accessed June 17, 2022).

Ryabchikov, L. (2000). "Kuchma supports Russia's proposals to Dniester settlement.," in *ITAR-TASS News Agency*.

Smirnov, I. N. (2004). *To live on our land*. Tiraspol: Tipar.

Tansey, O. (2007). *Democratization without a State: Democratic Regime-building in Kosovo*. Available online at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340601024355 (accessed February 22, 2021).

Taranu, A., and Gribincea, M. (2004). ●e 3D Strategy and Action Plan for the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. Conflictul transnistrean: culegere de documente şi materiale (1989–2012). (Chişinău: Lexicon-Prim), 293–313.

Ţăranu, A., and Gribincea, M. (2012). "Material informativ, elaborat de Ambasada Ucrainei în Republica Moldova,cu privire la posibilitatea retragerii trupelor ruse din Transnistria până la sfârşitul anului. 11/2003," in Conflictul transnistrean: culegere de documente şi materiale (1989-2012). Chişinău: Lexicon-Prim, pp. 124–129.

The Republic of Moldova. (1997). *Memorandum on the Bases for Normalization of Relations Between the Republic of Moldova and Pridnestrovie (The Moscow Memorandum)*. Available online at: http://mfa-pmr.org/en/cCy (accessed February 6, 2015).

The Russian Federation. (2019). *Paris "Normandie" Summit 9 December 2019 Common Agreed Conclusions*. Available online at: https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2260 (accessed May 26, 2022).

Trilateral Contact Group (2014). *Protocol on the Results of Consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group with Respect to the Joint Steps Aimed at the Implementation of the Peace Plan of the President of Ukraine, P. Poroshenko, and the Initiatives of the President of Russia, V. Putin*. Available online at: https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1363 (accessed May 26, 2022).

Trilateral Contact Group (2015). *Package of measures for the Implementation of theMinsk agreements (Minsk II)*. Available online at:

https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1364 (accessed May 26, 2022).

Ukraine Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005). "Ukrainian Transnistrian conflict settlement plan (The Yushchenko Plan)," in *Conflictul Transnistrean Culegere de documente și materiale*, eds A. Taranu and M. Gribnicea (Chișinău: Politcon).

Xinhua News Agency (2006). *Moldova rejects Trans-Dniester referendum results to join Russia*. Available online at: http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=saandan=XNEWS00020060918e29i0008 eandcat=aandep=ASE (accessed March 1, 2015).