

Addressing the Transnistrian Conflict: Competing Stances of Moldova's Political Parties and Expert Community

**Oleh Protsyk
Andrei Volentir
Igor Bucătaru**

ECMI Working Paper #37

January 2007

ECMI Working Paper #37

European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

Director: Dr. Marc Weller

Copyright 2007 European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

Published in January 2007 by the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

ISSN: 1435-9812

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| I. Introduction | 4 |
| II. Method and Data | 4 |
| III. Issue Salience and Polarization | 6 |
| IV. Positions on Individual Issues..... | 8 |
| V. Conflict Settlement Negotiation Process..... | 14 |
| VI. Use of Force in the Transnistrian Conflict | 19 |
| VII. Conclusion | 21 |
| VIII. Appendix I: Questionnaire | 23 |
| IX. Appendix II: List of the Transnistrian conflict-related issues..... | 24 |
| X. Appendix III: Spread/Polarization | 25 |
| XI. Appendix IV: Profiles of Political Parties | 26 |

Introduction

The Transnistrian conflict continues to be one of the most important issues facing political parties and the expert community in Moldova. Since the start of the post-communist transition period, political parties have routinely felt the necessity to articulate their approaches to solving the conflict. During both electoral and inter-electoral periods, the Transnistrian issue has occupied a special position on the country's political agenda. This has required political parties to take a stance on the issue. Similarly, the country's expert community, which includes academics, political analysts, and media commentators, has struggled with the need to explain and interpret the conflict to their audiences. In presenting such interpretations for the general public, they could not avoid formulating their own positions on potential causes of and solutions to the conflict.

The authors here employ elite survey techniques as one approach to analyzing the variation in political parties' and expert communities' attitudes towards a host of problems related to the Transnistrian conflict. The paper provides a detailed description of the documented attitudinal differences and similarities on various aspects of the Transnistrian conflict among key Moldovan political parties that has been drawn from a diversified political spectrum. It also attempts to document the differences in parties' attitudes as they change over time.

The recent origins of the party system in Moldova and rapid transformations in the domestic and international environment in which the parties operate make the evolution of the Moldovan party system a very dynamic process. While the paper focuses on the analysis of party positions through the eyes of both party functionaries and members of the expert community, it compliments this analysis through the discussion of the attitudinal disposition of experts themselves. Given the critical role that the expert community plays in forming public opinion such discussions are a relevant addition to the main focus of the paper.¹

Method and Data

This study employed a Likert-type scale to survey midlevel party elites as well as members of the expert community. The respondents were asked to place political parties on a 10-point scale based on a series of policy issues. Along with the general ideological questions, a set of questions related to the Transnistria conflict was included in the questionnaire. Party elites were asked to rate both their own party as well as other parties included in the survey on each issue listed. Members of the expert community were asked to rate all parties but also to indicate their own position on each issue. The survey was conducted during December 2005 and January-February 2006. A sample of the survey questionnaire is provided in Appendix I.

Political parties that received more than 2% of the votes in the last parliamentary elections of March 6, 2005 were included in the study. The set includes the **Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova** (PCRM), **Moldova Noastra Alliance Party** (PAMN), **Christian Democratic People's Party** (PPCD), **Democratic Party of Moldova** (PDM), **Socio-Liberal Party** (PSL), **Socio-Democratic Party of Moldova** (PSDM), and "**Patria-Rodina-Ravnopravie**" (P-R-R), a bloc of parties, which are currently in the process of merging. Appendix V provides a short profile for each party/party bloc.

Party functionaries had been interviewed from each of these parties countrywide. The total number of respondents was 101. They were distributed as follows: PCRM – 15, PAMN – 15, PPCD – 15, PDM – 15, PSL – 15, PSDM – 15, P-R-R – 11. The lower number of P-R-R respondents reflects the fact that this party has a more limited number of territorial organizations than the other parties in the survey. It has organizational structures only in certain administrative-territorial units in the Northern area, mainly in the Bălți municipality, in the Gagauz-Yeri area and in the Chișinău municipality.

¹ The data collected for this paper was initially presented at the Seminar "Strengthening Links between Constituencies for Constructive Conflict Settlement in Transnistria", organized by the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), 20-23 July 2006, Flensburg, Germany.

At the initial stage, it had been asked to the political parties' secretariats to provide the names of, at least, three contact people from the following five geographic areas: North, Center, South, Gagauz-Yeri, and Chişinău. Gagauz-Yeri was the only region where we encountered difficulties in identifying respondents. Only PCRM, P-R-R and to a smaller extent, PAMN, had organizational presence there, which is probably a reflection of a low level of integration of the Gagauzian region into the national political scene. Party functionaries from the central party structures had been interviewed in order to compensate for missing observations from that region.

Additionally, face-to-face interviews were conducted with eleven members of the expert community on a national level. Experts were selected for their prominence, knowledge and experience in covering party system issues. Experts represented various segments of the civil society such as think tanks (Institute of Public Policies, Association for Participatory Democracy, Development and Social Initiatives Institute "Viitorul"), mass media ("Europa Liberă" radio, "Moldavskie Vedomosti" newspaper, "Jurnal de Chişinău" newspaper), as well as academic institutions (Moldova State University, Political Studies and International Relations Institute).

Similarly to the party functionaries, the experts were asked to provide their estimates of contemporary party positions (2006). Additionally, they were also asked to give their retrospective evaluation of party positions as of 2001.² There is an agreement among Moldova analysts that the 2001 parliamentary elections signified a major transformation of the party system in Moldova. The communist party's rise to power and continued dominance in Moldovan politics is the most prominent feature of this transformation. To capture the positions of major political parties at the time of the 2001 elections, we asked experts to answer questions that were essentially similar to the questionnaires they had to fill out for 2006.

The list of questions and the wording of alternatives for each of the questions included into the questionnaire are provided here:

List of the Transnistrian conflict-related issues in the questionnaire

| Issue | Point 1 | Point 10 |
|---|---|---|
| Format of state organization | Federal state | Unitary state |
| Nature of the Transnistrian conflict | Ethnic conflict | Political conflict |
| Causes of conflict | Internal conflict | Geopolitical conflict |
| Russian military presence in Transnistria | Stabilizing factor | Destabilizing factor |
| Status of Transnistria | Large autonomy | Limited autonomy |
| Status of Gagauzia | Large autonomy | Limited autonomy |
| Sequencing stages of conflict settlement | Status first | Democratization first |
| Issue of demilitarization | Demilitarization of Republic of Moldova | Demilitarization of the Transnistrian region only |
| Legitimacy of the Transnistrian leadership | Representative leadership | Not legitimate leadership |
| Conditions for holding elections | Elections should be conducted even if not all conditions on | Elections should be conducted only if all conditions on |

²We received responses to the part of our questionnaire that dealt with retrospective evaluations of party positions in 2001 only from ten out of eleven experts we interviewed.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Format of negotiation | democratization are met Maintaining the current format | democratization are met Changing the format (granting EU and US a status of mediators) |
| Participation of Romania in negotiations | Romania can participate only through the EU | Romania should directly participate in negotiations |
| Use of force | Military force should not be used under any circumstances | Military force can be used if deemed necessary |

Issues included in the questionnaire had to meet two criteria. First, they had to be topical and publicly discussed. Second, policy issues had to be at least moderately controversial among politicians. Therefore, it had been tried to frame the choices as much as possible in terms of *positional alternatives* rather than *valence issues* on which parties declare to pursue the same objective, but dispute each other's competence. For example, most Moldovan politicians would agree that country reintegration is an important goal for Moldovan political elites. Asking whether a policy of reintegrating Transnistria into Moldova should be pursued would be an example of valence issues that we tried to avoid.

Issue Salience and Polarization

The presentation of findings started with a short discussion of the salience of individual issues and the extent of party polarization on these issues. Variation in issue salience and in degree of party polarization provides valuable information on relative importance of individual issues and on the extent of policy differences among parties across policy space. A detailed analysis of party politicians and experts' perceptions of positions that individual political parties occupy on some of the key issues included in the questionnaire had been presented.

▪ *Issue Salience*

Salience or importance of issues was measured as a mean of scores that all party politicians, regardless of party affiliation, assign to each issue on the 5-point scale. Appendix III lists all issues in a descending order according to these criteria. The appendix also provides averages of importance scores assigned to each issue by members of individual parties. This allows to examine how salience of issues varies across parties. The fact that none of the issues receive a mean score of less than 3 indicates that issues included in the questionnaire resonate with party politicians. This fact, of course, is a product of selection procedures which we employed and which allowed only highly topical questions to be included into the final version of the questionnaire.

The issue of *state organization*, which involved choosing between alternatives of opting for a federal or unitary model of state organization, received the highest salience score. This probably reflects a high resonance in public discourse in Moldova of a federalization initiative which was introduced by the communist party as a main component of its conflict settlement plan at the start of the 2001-2005 parliamentary term. The issues of changing the negotiation format in Transnistrian conflict settlement negotiations (by upgrading the EU and US to the full membership status in the negotiations) and addressing the topic of the Russian military presence in the Transnistrian region were also rated as highly important.

The issue of the *Romanian participation* in conflict settlement negotiations was rated by our respondents as the least important among the issues included in the questionnaire. The question about refining Gagauzia's autonomy status, which is sometimes seen as an inspiration for developing a template for seeking accommodation in the Transnistrian case, also fell at the lower

end of continuum. As the appendix data shows, the issue about the Romanian participation exhibits an especially substantial variation in individual parties' responses. Respondents from the **Christian Democratic People's Party** (PPCD), which is traditionally the most pro-Romanian party, considered this issue as highly important (score of 5), while respondents from a number of other parties provided average score of less than 4.

Overall, the data on issue salience suggest that party politicians consider the issues related to solving the Transnistrian conflict as highly important. Taking a grand mean of salience scores assigned to each issue by all party politicians in our sample produces a score of 4.55. This score was higher than the grand means that we obtained for the separate groups of questions on economic and cultural issues that are not included in this report. This score is also on a high end of grand mean scores produced by studies that employed a similar methodology for analysis of salience scores for the groups of related issues.³ Besides attributing this score to the persistently high salience of various Transnistria-related issues, another interpretation of this finding is possible. The very high value of the salience score might mean that the Moldovan party politicians exhibit low capacity to prioritize their attention and to distinguish between more and less important issues in relation to the Transnistria conflict. A higher ability to discriminate between issues and to assign a much higher priority to a few most critical issues would have resulted in a lower value of a grand mean.

▪ *Polarization*

To estimate the extent of the spread of party positions across issues another indicator has been employed that is common in the party politics literature. It is the standard deviation of the mean scores that all politicians in our sample assigned to each party on the 10-point scale that we provided for each question in the questionnaire. A higher value of standard deviation score indicates that parties' positions on a specific issue are more different or polarized. A lower standard deviation score means smaller degree of polarization/spread in parties' position on a given issue.⁴

Appendix IV provides details on spread/polarization for individual issues included in the survey. As the appendix indicates, the most extreme spread in parties' position is registered for questions about Romania's participation in conflict settlement negotiations and Russian military presence in the region. This is largely due to the fact that our respondents assign to PPCD and PRR, which are two political organizations that are located at the opposite ends of political spectrum, the most extreme scores namely on these issues.

The use of military force for solving the Transnistrian conflict is rated by our party respondents as, by a large margin, the least polarizing issue for the Moldovan party system. Standard deviation of 1.08 indicates the existence of only small differences among political parties on this issue. A close look at individual parties' scores, which are also reported in Appendix IV, reveals that party positions are grouped around the center of the 10-point scale whose end points were defined as 'the force should not be applied at all' and 'the force could be applied if deemed necessary'.

By comparative standards, the overall spread/polarization of party positions on the Transnistrian conflict-related issues is rather high. The mean value of standard deviations on all issues listed in the appendix is 2.06. For a 10-point issue scale, a score in the neighborhood of 2.0 to 2.5 indicates high polarization, while a score around 1.0 to 1.5 would signal low level of polarization. This is a common interpretation of magnitudes of differences in standard deviation

³ Herbert Kitschelt, Z. Mansfeldova, R. Markowski, and G. Toka. Post-communist party systems: competition, representation and inter-party cooperation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

⁴ As Kitschelt et al. (1999) argued, alternative interpretations of this measure are possible. A higher level of spread might mean that the positions of parties are both *clear* and *distant* or, alternatively, it might mean that positions of parties are only *clear* but respondents use the entire space offered by scale to represent each party's specific position, thus over representing the actual degree of polarization. Unfortunately, the format of our questionnaire does not allow to distinguish between these two different interpretations.

scores for comparative studies employing similar methodologies of studying differences in party policy positions.⁵

Such a high overall level of spread/polarization on the Transnistrian conflict-related issues is a function of including PRR in the list of parties whose positions were examined in our project. Scrutinizing individual party scores reported in Appendix IV reveals consistently large policy differences between PRR and the rest of political parties on the vast majority of issues. Although parties that recently started the process of merger into PRR received almost 8% of votes in the 2005 elections, they were not able to gain representation in parliament due to their individual inability to cross-electoral thresholds for individual parties and party blocks. Parties that are currently represented in parliament exhibit much less policy differences on the set of Transnistrian issues. The discussion of party positions on key individual issues in the next sections of this paper will demonstrate this in more details.

4. Positions on individual issues

In this section of the paper, the results of the assessment of party positions by members of expert community are discussed first. Secondly, both the data from the entire sample of party elites and self-evaluation responses by members of each individual party are analyzed. Finally, information on assessment by members of expert community of their own individual positions is presented. The latter reveals important information about preferences of a social group that plays a major role in shaping societal opinion about appropriate strategies for conflict settlement in Transnistria.

- ***State Organization***

Federalism. The proposal to change the state structure of the Republic of Moldova from a unitary system to a federal system gained prominence after the communist party's accession to power in 2001. The proposal was seen as a way to solve the Transnistrian conflict and to ensure the breakaway region's reintegration into Moldova. The federalization plan proved to be very controversial in terms of Moldovan internal politics and, as of the end of 2006, failed to bring any breakthroughs in the conflict settlement process. It is, however, still believed by many international analysts that some sort of federal constitutional arrangement with a more balanced distribution of powers than the one that was envisioned by the failed 2003 Kozak plan of federalization can provide a basis for country reintegration.⁶

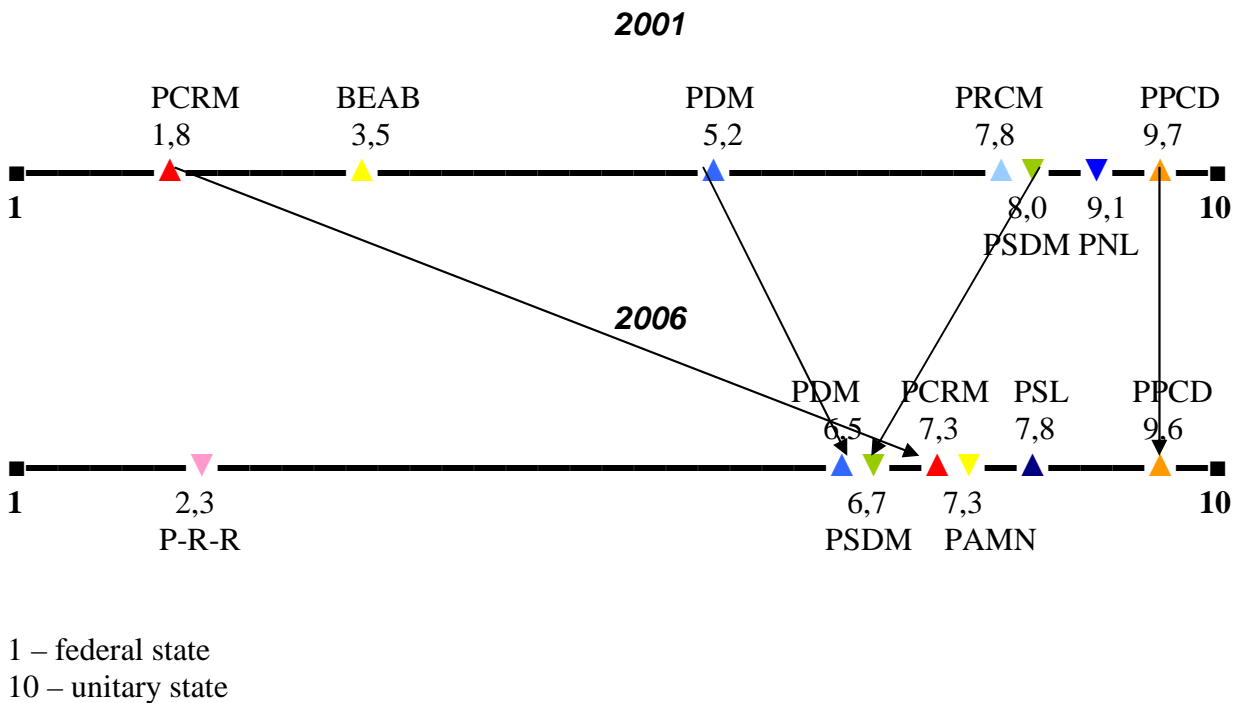
The vast majority of Moldovan political elites, however, disagree. Graph 1 provides details of responses by both party experts and party functionaries to the question regarding federal arrangement as an appropriate model for reintegrating Moldova (the complete wording of this question is provided in Appendix I).

⁵ See, for example, H. Kitschelt and R. Smyth, "Programmatic Party Cohesion in Emerging Postcommunist Democracies: Russia in Comparative Context", *Comparative Political Studies* 35:1228, 2002.

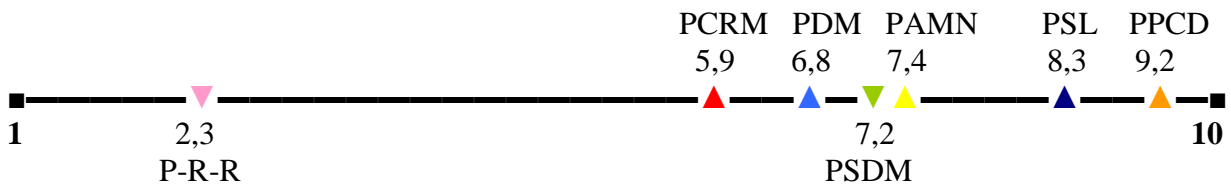
⁶ For the 2003 Kozak plan, see J. Lowenhardt "The OSCE, Moldova, and Russian Diplomacy in 2003," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 4: 103-112.

1. Form of state organization: *federal state versus unitary state*

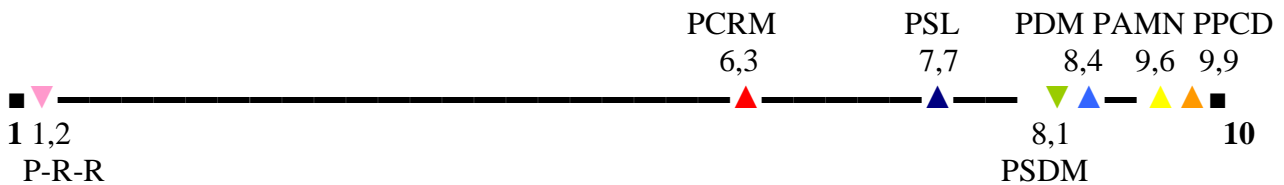
1a. Changes in political parties' positions as perceived by expert community



1b. Party elites' survey, 2006



1c. Party self-evaluation, 2006



Legend: PCRM - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova; PAMN - Party "Our Moldova Alliance"; PPCD - Christians Democratic People's Party; DPM - Democratic Party of Moldova; SLP - Social-Liberal Party; PSDM - Social-Democratic Party of Moldova; P-R-R - Patria-Rodina-Ravnopravie; BEAB - Electoral Bloc "Braghiș' Alliance"; PRCM - Party of Renaissance and Conciliation of Moldova; PNL - National Liberal Party.

Source: European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Survey, Chisinau, February 2006.

Graph 1a suggests that, in the experts' view, there has been a dramatic shift in the attitudes of the main political parties towards the idea of federalization between 2001 and 2006. The diversity of positions on federalization is the main feature of the experts' rating of political parties for 2001. As the graph indicates, the experts believe that both PCRМ and BEAB positioned themselves in the early 2000s as accepting some sort of federal arrangement. With the exception of PDM, other main political parties shared a rather similar policy preference in maintaining unitary organization of the state.

By 2006, positions of key political parties on the issue of federalism converged, according to the experts, to a considerable extent. Maintaining the unitary structure of the state became a shared preference among political parties that enjoy a considerable level of popular support. The most dramatic development was the change in policy position of the communist party (PCRМ) that had largely abandoned the idea of federalization after the failed 2003 constitutional negotiations with Transnistria. This move as well as the disappearance of BEAB as a separate political force prior to the 2005 parliamentary elections meant that no political force that supports the idea of federalization is represented in the current parliament. Two parties, which consistently supported a federal arrangement but were unable to secure sufficient electoral support to gain parliamentary representation in the 2005 elections, are now in the process of merging into Patria-Rodina-Ravnopravie (P-R-R).

The Graph also reveals that the averages of scores assigned by experts to PCRМ and to its main electoral competitor in the 2005 parliamentary campaign, PAMN, are fully identical. While the identical character of scores is a matter of coincidence, this coincidence underscores the fact that, on average, the experts see little difference on this particular issue in the position of the two parties. This is especially important due to the fact that because of their electoral weight these parties represent to the voters two major alternatives in terms of the general left-right ideological placement.

Graphs 1b and 1c provide data from the survey of party functionaries. This data reflects party positions in December 2005 – January 2006. Graph "Party elites' sample" plots mean results of responses from the entire sample of party functionaries who were interviewed in the course of this project. Graph 'Party's Self-Evaluation' presents mean results of responses by functionaries from each party only about their own party's position.

These two graphs suggest a pattern in parties' position on the issue of federalism that is similar to the one articulated by the experts. In the view of party functionaries, all of the parties, with the exception of P-R-R, are closer to the unitary state model than that of federalism. It is also worth noting that functionaries from all parties who prefer a unitary state model consider their parties' stance on the issue of federalism to be more radical than the scores based on the functionaries' responses from the entire sample. For example, PAMN's sample score is 7.4 while PAMN's party functionaries' responses produced a self-evaluation score of 9.6. The only exception is in the case of PSL for which the self-evaluation score is lower than the sample score.

An especially substantial difference between PAMN's self-evaluation and sample scores is likely to be caused by internal organizational changes in the party, which, in their turn, had an impact on party's programmatic profile. By the time of our survey a social-democratic group had split from PAMN thus increasing the chances that PAMN respondents whom we interviewed come from the liberal wing of the party. This wing's stand on federalism seems to be more nationalist and similar to PPCD's position in this respect.

Given the ruling-party status of PCRМ, this party's position on the issue of state organization is of special importance. Unlike the experts, the party functionaries from both the communist party as well as other political parties included in our sample consider the party's opposition to the issue of federal arrangement as the least radical among the parties represented in the parliament. The party was the main proponent of the federalization plan in the early 2000s and, although the party officially abandoned the federalization agenda after the failure of the negotiation talks in 2003, the earlier full-scale endorsement of federalism probably continues to shape the party functionaries' perception of the communist party's stance on this issue.

The communist party's dramatic change in position on the issue of federalism between 2001 and 2006 can be partially attributed to the reaction of the Moldovan expert community to the federalization initiative. The fact that public reaction to this initiative was overwhelmingly negative can be explained to a significant extent by the experts' criticism of the federalization plans. The communist party failed to convince the expert community about the usefulness of the federalization idea as a means of the conflict resolution process and thus was unable to rely on support from this group of influential opinion makers when it tried to gain larger public support for the initiative.

Our survey of the experts' own preferences about state organization reveals that the experts as a group share strongly negative views regarding the federalization of Moldova. Table 1 provides details of the experts' responses to this question.

Table 1. Individual experts' self-placement on issue of state organization: federal state versus unitary state

| Expert | E1 | E2 | E3 | E4 | E5 | E6 | E7 | E8 | E9 | E10 | E11 | Average |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|---------|
| Evaluation | 9 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 7,55 |

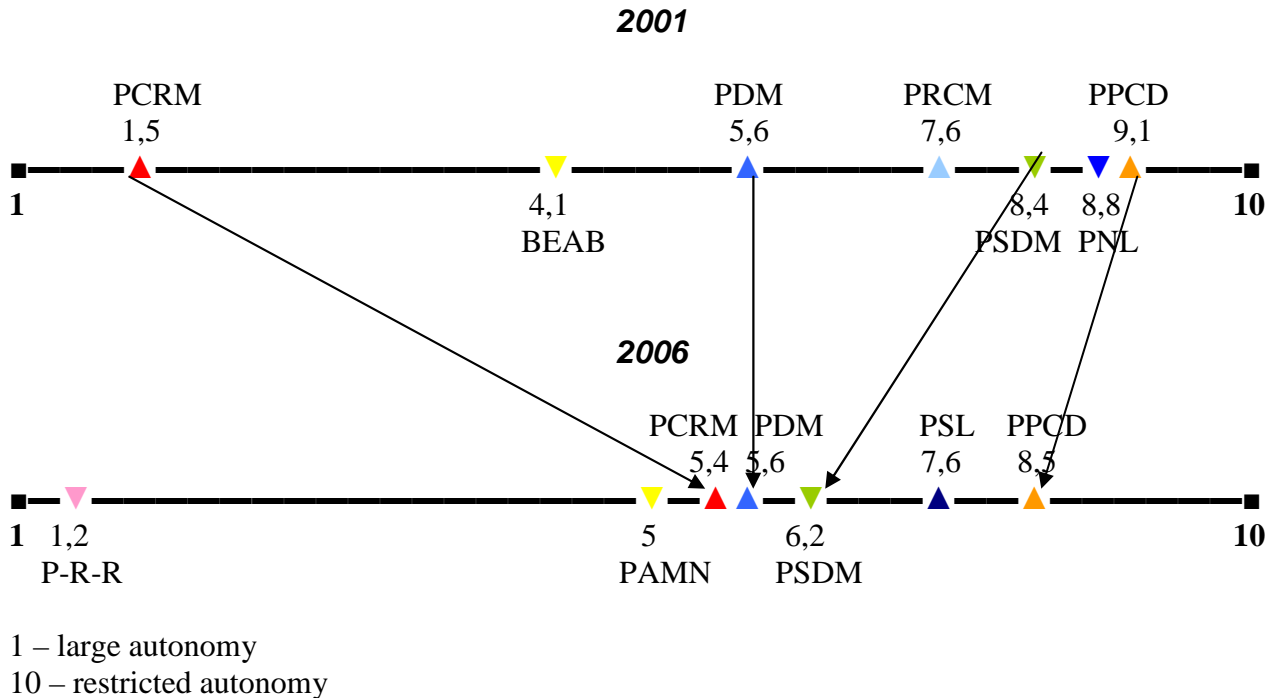
The average score for the group is 7.55, which means that the expert group's position is in close proximity to that of the group of parties whose self-evaluation scores indicate their strong support of the idea of a unitary state. The experts' position could be conceptualized as even more radical if one recalculates the average by excluding an obvious outlier - the opinion of an expert who is denoted in Table 1 as expert E5. This expert's opinion was at odds with other experts' opinions not only on this question but also on most of the other questions included in the questionnaire. Excluding E5's responses from the calculations of the mean produces a new average score of 8.2. This provides even stronger evidence that on this particular issue policy distance between the expert community and the political parties opposing the idea of federalism is negligible. It is partly in response to this pressure from civil society as represented by the expert community and from other political parties that the communists, who experienced a lack of cooperation from the Transnistrian side in the process of drafting a federal constitutional proposal, decided to shelve the federalization initiative by the start of their second term in office.

It is also important to qualify a negative stance that most of the parliamentary parties and experts take on the issue of federalism. The idea of a federal arrangement is strongly associated in the Moldovan context with the failed 2003 Kozak memorandum. The 2003 memorandum gained notoriety among the Moldovan politicians for some of its provisions, which if the plan were adopted, would have created dysfunctional and stalemate-prone central governmental institutions of a unified state. A different formulation of questions about federalism could have led to different responses from the party functionaries. For example PSL, which supports the ideas of European federalism, already in 2002-2003 made official its position about the possibility of accepting the idea of federalization if the latter meant a symmetrical federalist state with more than one federal subject and equal status of all federal units. This model, which is sometimes reconceptualized as a proposal for decentralized regionalism, is frequently discussed in the Moldovan political and expert community.

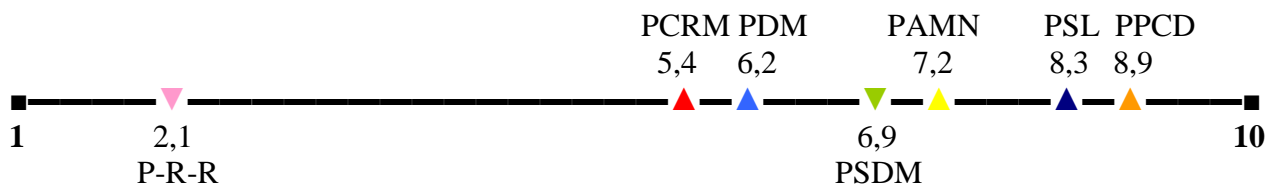
Autonomy Status for Transnistria. The question about the scope of autonomy was the one that directly dealt with parties and experts' preferences with regards to the potential future status of Transnistria, if the conflict is settled on the basis of granting Transnistria a special autonomy status under the constitutional framework of a reintegrated state. The endpoints of the 10-point scale for this particular issue were defined as large and restricted autonomy. We chose to provide a simple specification of endpoints instead of a possible detailed description of alternative autonomy models since the latter specification would impose unrealistically high requirements of expert knowledge of autonomy designs on our respondents from the ranks of the political party.

2. Transnistria status: large autonomy versus restricted autonomy

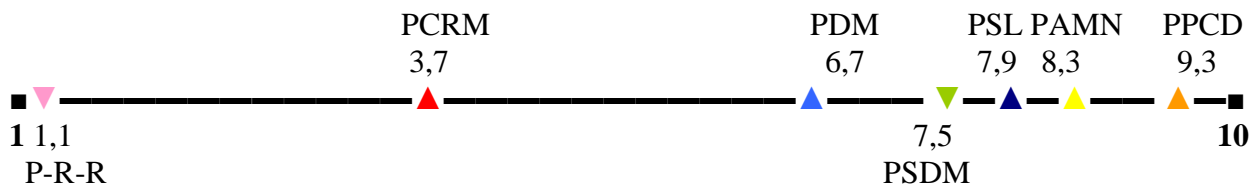
2a. Changes in political parties' positions as perceived by expert community



2b. Party elites' survey, 2006



2c. Party self-evaluation, 2006



Legend: PCRDM - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova; PAMN - Party "Our Moldova Alliance"; PPCD - Christians Democratic People's Party; PDM - Democratic Party of Moldova; PSL - Social-Liberal Party; PSDM - Social-Democratic Party of Moldova; P-R-R - Patria-Rodina-Ravnopravie; BEAB - Electoral Bloc "Braghiș' Alliance"; PRCM - Party of Renaissance and Conciliation of Moldova; PNL - National Liberal Party.

Source: European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Survey, Chisinau, February 2006.

Graph 2a shows a pattern that is similar to the one presented in Graph 1a. In experts' view, the communist party changed its position quite substantially between 2001 and 2006. Although the magnitude of the change in the communist party's position on this issue is not as large as on the issue of federalism, it suggests a very significant hardening of the attitudes inside the communist party towards the character of prospective settlement and towards the degree of autonomy that Transnistria should enjoy. The graph also suggests the existence of only minor differences between PCRM and PAMN on this issue.

Expert scores also suggest a considerable shift in the position of PSDM between 2001 and 2006. PSDM is not represented in the current parliament but enjoys high name recognition due to the fact that it is one of the oldest Moldovan political parties. The party longevity should increase survey respondents' ability to identify party position on key political issues. The fact that the experts report a substantive shift in party's position is driven, first of all, by the leadership changes. After the resignation of the party's long term leader the new leadership chose to adopt a distinctly different stand on the host of Transnistrian conflict-related issues. A similar pattern of this party's drift towards a more middle-of-the-road position is evident in the case of the previously discussed issue of federalism as well as in some other issues included into the questionnaire.

Results from the sample of party functionaries, which are reported in Graph 2b, produce a pattern that is largely similar to the one based on expert responses. The major finding from comparing the results from Graphs 2b and 2c is that PCRM politicians believe that their party has a much more conciliatory stand on the issue of the scope of potential autonomy than the average opinion from the general sample of party elites attributes to the communists. PCRM's self-evaluation score is 3.7 while PCRM's sample score is 5.4. Party self-evaluation scores from Graph 2b suggest that the ruling communist party is willing to negotiate a settlement for Transnistria based on autonomy of a greater scope than other major Moldovan parties included into this study, with the obvious exception of PRR, would ideally prefer.

Based on party self-evaluation scores one concludes that the policy difference on this issue between *communists* and *PAMN*, the second most successful party in the 2005 parliamentary elections, is very substantial (PAMN-PCRM distance based on self-evaluation scores: 4.6). Yet the general picture that emerges from comparing different measures of party positions is more complicated. General sample scores reported in Graph 2b suggest that the magnitude of policy difference between the two parties is significantly smaller (PAMN-PCRM distance based on elite sample scores: 1.8). The averages of expert scores that are presented in Graph 2a suggest that there is a very minor difference of a reversed nature between the two parties (PAMN-PCRM distance based on expert scores: -.4). The contradictory opinions about PAMN's position on this issue might be partly explained by the same internal change (the departure of a social-democratic wing) that we discussed while analyzing PAMN's position on the issue of federalism. A substantial difference in opinions might be also a product of parties' positioning during the 2005 parliamentary campaign. The PAMN leaders were especially interested during that period of time to produce signals indicating that they are more capable than their main electoral rivals to engage the Transnistrian authorities in negotiations about the conflict settlement. At the same time, The PAMN leaders were also a subject of criticism by some Moldovan media and by their electoral competitors for allegedly having been engaged in non-transparent business dealings with the Transnistrian secessionists. All these factors might have had some effect on respondents' perceptions of the party's position on the issue of Transnistrian autonomy.

Experts' own opinions on the issue of a scope of autonomy for Transnistria have been polarized to a greater extent than their opinions on the issue of federalism. *Table 2* below gives results of experts' self-placement on this issue:

Table 2. Individual experts' self-placement on issue of **Transnistria status: large autonomy versus restricted autonomy**

| Expert | E1 | E2 | E3 | E4 | E5 | E6 | E7 | E8 | E9 | E10 | E11 | Average |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|---------|
| Evaluation | 10 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 6,18 |

While the table's average indicates that the central tendency in experts' opinion is in favor of a slightly restricted autonomy, individual scores reveal a very significant spread in experts' opinion. They also point to experts' tendency to occupy the most radical alternative positions on this issue. Seven out of eleven experts identified their position as being located on one of the opposite poles of the scale. Four experts chose to score their position as 10 while three experts identified their position as 1. This suggests that there is little agreement in the expert community on the issue of the scope of autonomy. This finding is especially puzzling in the light of many years of discussions in the Moldovan expert community about the nature of the autonomy arrangement for Transnistria.

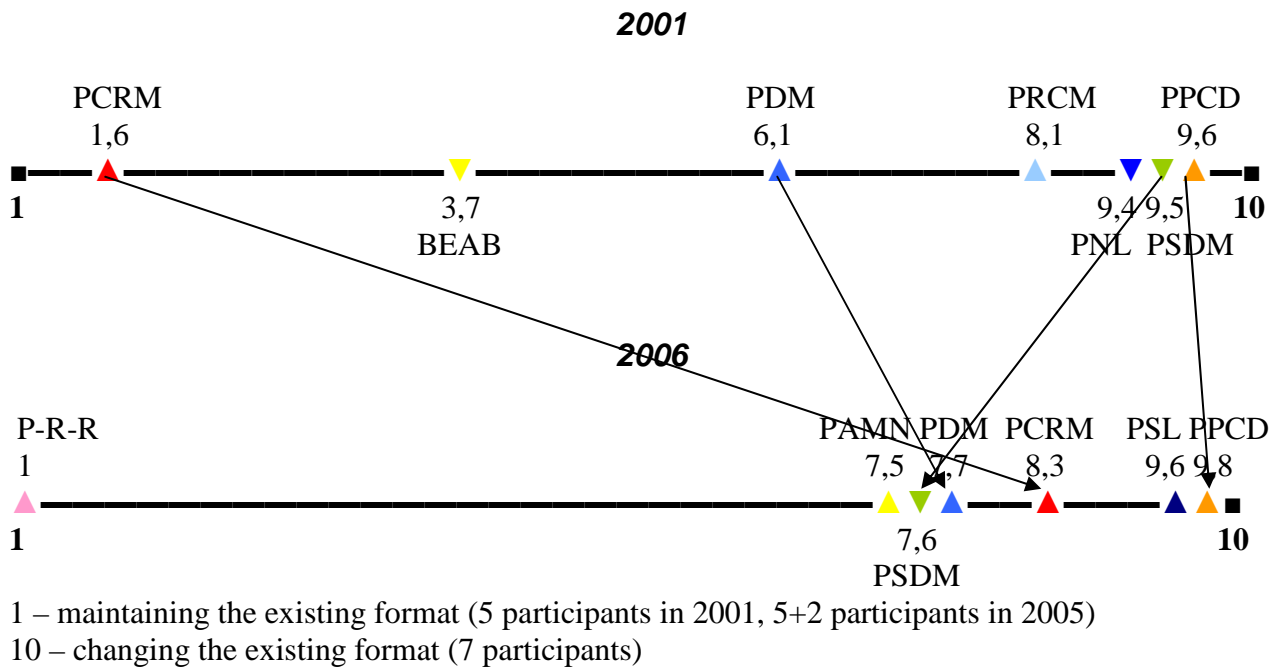
- ***Conflict Settlement Negotiation Process***

Negotiation Framework. The current format of talks is known as "5+2". It includes Moldova, Transnistria, OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine as full members and the EU and US as observers. Many in Moldova have consistently criticized the original pentagonal format for, among other reasons, allowing Russia to dominate the talks. The official inclusion of the EU and US as observers in the talks in 2005 has not changed this perception of the Russian domination, which is shared by a number of leading politicians and experts in Moldova. The alternative that is advocated by the latter is granting the EU and US a full membership status in the talks.

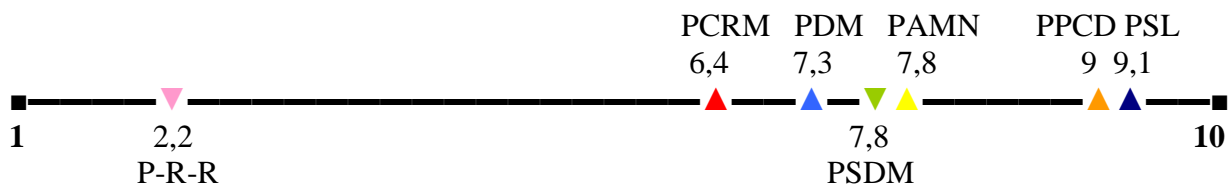
The findings on importance/salience of individual issues, which are reported in Appendix III, indicate that the Moldovan party elites consider the issue of negotiation format to be one of the most important topics. Parties' position on this issue changed substantially over time and in a way that is consistent with the changes of party positions on the previously discussed issues.

3. Negotiations framework: maintaining the existing format versus modifying the existing format

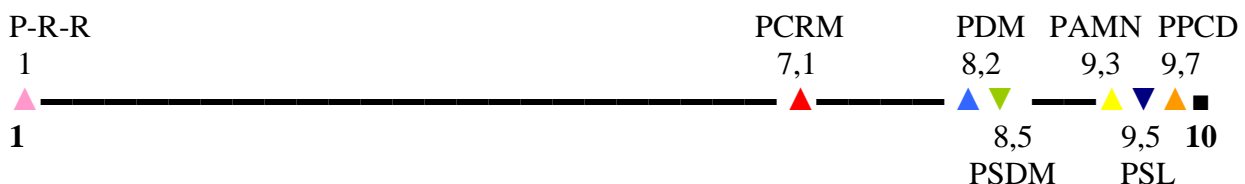
3a. Changes in political parties' positions as perceived by expert community



3b. Party elites' survey, 2006



3c. Party self-evaluation, 2006



Legend: PCRDM - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova; PAMN - Party "Our Moldova Alliance"; PPCD - Christians Democratic People's Party; DPM - Democratic Party of Moldova; SLP - Social-Liberal Party; PSDM - Social-Democratic Party of Moldova; P-R-R - Patria-Rodina-Ravnopravie; BEAB - Electoral Bloc "Braghiș' Alliance"; PRCM - Party of Renaissance and Conciliation of Moldova; PNL - National Liberal Party.

Source: European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Survey, Chisinau, February 2006.

As **Graph 3a** shows, experts believe that only parties with the most clearly articulated pro-Western position advocated the format change in 2001. The communist party, which came to power in 2001 on the basis of program that in terms of foreign policy goals envisioned much closer ties with Russia, is seen by experts strongly favoring the existent format of negotiations. By 2006 things change radically. President Voronin and the communist party leadership, frustrated with the lack of progress in negotiations turned, firmly in favor of format modification. This change in position of communist party is captured in Graph 3a.

General sample and self-evaluation scores reported in **Graph 3b and 3c** reflect the general tendency among the main political parties, with the usual exception of PRR, to favor the format change. While there is a substantial degree of spread in parties' positions reported in **Graph 3b**, the self-evaluation scores presented in **Graph 3c** suggest that the issue of a format change might be the one on which there is very little actual policy difference among the majority of political parties. The fact that the position of communists on Graph 3c, which is a result of averaging responses by communist party members about position of their party, is slightly distanced from the rest of the parties favoring format change might mean that some communist party functionaries do not share official party leadership enthusiasm about fully engaging the representatives of the West in the negotiation talks.

Unlike the issue about the scope of autonomy for Transnistria, which revealed a high level of disagreement among members of expert community, the question about negotiation format did not produce major differences in opinions among experts. In fact, this question saw the least degree of spread/polarization of expert opinions for all Transnistrian conflict-related issues.

*Table 3. Individual experts' self-placement on issue of **negotiation framework**: maintaining the existing format versus modifying the existing format*

| Expert | E1 | E2 | E3 | E4 | E5 | E6 | E7 | E8 | E9 | E10 | E11 | Average |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|---------|
| Evaluation | 10 | 9 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9,36 |

The table reveals that experts in no uncertain terms and almost unanimously support the change in the negotiation format and the full involvement of the EU and US in the negotiation process. This position of the expert community has been a long standing one as witnessed by the fact that many of the interviewed experts have been involved in elaborating or publicly supporting the well-publicized civil society initiative of the '3 Ds' strategy with regards to Transnistria (demilitarization, decriminalization, democratization). The internationalization of the conflict settlement process has been envisioned to be an integral component of the plan.

Sequencing the settlement process. The renewed emphasis on pursuing the goals of democratization of the Transnistrian region in the aftermath of the announcement of the Yushchenko plan reminded about one of the old dilemmas that the Moldovan authorities face in dealing with Transnistria. While focusing on demanding internal changes in the breakaway region, Chisinau has to choose how to address the question of the future status for Transnistria under the framework of a re-integrated state. At the moment the Moldovan authorities abstain from giving commitments regarding the detailed provisions of the status. The summer 2005 legislative acts passed by the Moldovan parliament are rather vague on this issue.⁷ The OSCE mission in Moldova, which is a key international organization in the region, views the lack of detailed provisions on the status as blocking progress toward a final settlement. In the view of the OSCE mission, the talks on status, which address primarily but not exclusively the issue of distribution of competencies

⁷ For a discussion of potential shortcomings of Transnistria-related legislative acts passed by the Moldovan parliament see Oleh Protsyk, "Moldova's Dilemmas in Democratizing and Reintegrating Transnistria," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53/4 (2006): 29-42.

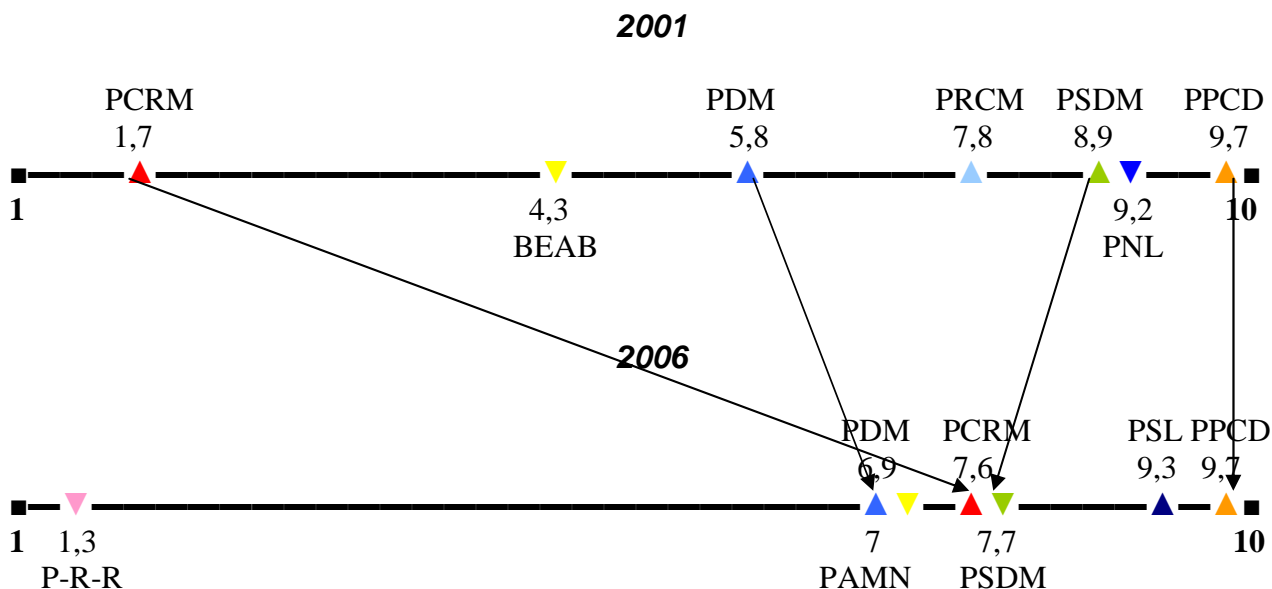
between central and regional authorities, should be conducted, at least in parallel with the talks addressing internal reforms in Transnistria.⁸

This issue was formulated in our questionnaire as an alternative between prioritizing policies directed on ensuring internal transformations in Transnistria versus securing the agreement over the status of the region. As the data in Appendix III reveals, our respondents from political parties do not rate this issue among the most important Transnistria-related topics that political parties have to address. The issue gets very little coverage in public debates in Moldova, especially after the emergence of the so-called consensus on Transnistria issue was declared and formalized in the passage of the summer 2005 legislative acts by the parliamentary parties.

⁸Presentation by Gottfried Hanne, Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission in Moldova, at the Seminar "Roads towards Democratisation of the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova-II," September 27, 2006, Chisinau.

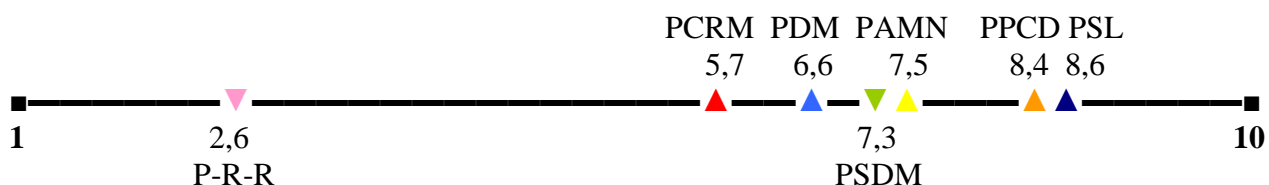
4. Sequencing settlement negotiations: first the agreement on status of Transnistria versus first the unconditional democratization of Transnistria

4a. Changes in political parties' positions as perceived by expert community

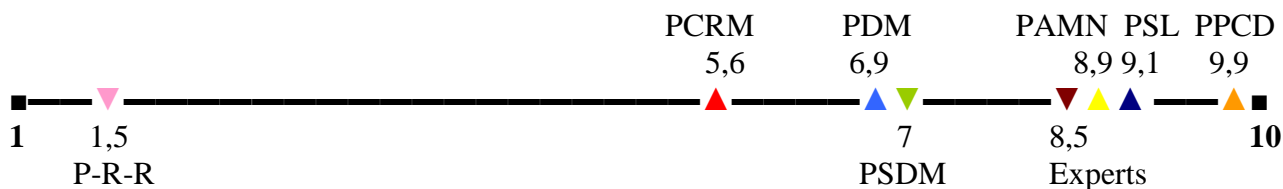


1 – first the agreement on status of Transnistria
 10 – first the unconditional democratization of Transnistria

4b. Party elites' survey, 2006



4c. Party self-evaluation, 2006



Legend: PCRМ - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova; PAMN - Party "Our Moldova Alliance"; PPCD - Christians Democratic People's Party; PDM - Democratic Party of Moldova; SLP - Social-Liberal Party; PSDM - Social-Democratic Party of Moldova; P-R-R - Patria-Rodina-Ravnopravie; BEAB - Electoral Bloc "Braghiș' Alliance"; PRCM - Party of Renaissance and Conciliation of Moldova; PNL - National Liberal Party.

Source: European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Survey, Chisinau, February 2006.

As **Graph 4a** shows, the experts believe that upon assumption of power in 2001 communists were willing to pursue status talks without any preconditions on the internal democratization in the region. That position, similar to the position on issue discussed above, changed radically by the time of our survey that was conducted in the aftermath of the Yushchenko plan announcement and the summer 2005 Moldovan parliament's responses to the plan.

Expert and party respondent scores in all three graphs in Graph 4 indicate that there is an overall tendency for parties represented in the current parliament to prioritize the goals of achieving internal democratization in Transnistria. Yet the scores reported in **Graph 4b and 4c** indicate that the position of the governing communist party is only slightly off the very middle of scale. This suggests that the communist party might be weighting the potential benefits from conducting status talks in a parallel with democratization talks and might consider pursuing this strategy.

Experts' own opinions are much more in favor of prioritizing democratization component than they believe the ruling party's collective stand is:

*Table 4. Individual experts' self-placement on issue of **sequencing settlement negotiations: first the agreement on status of Transnistria versus first the unconditional democratization of Transnistria***

| Expert | E1 | E2 | E3 | E4 | E5 | E6 | E7 | E8 | E9 | E10 | E11 | Average |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|---------|
| Evaluation | 10 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8,45 |

The pattern of the experts' self-placement on this issue is similar to the one reported on the issue of negotiation format. The average of expert self-placement scores is 8.45, which is unambiguously close to the democratization pole of our scale. This is not an unusual result given the fact that the idea of democratization in Transnistria as a precondition for reaching a conflict settlement has a strong following among the members of expert community. Democratization was one of the cornerstones of the already mentioned "3 D" conflict resolution strategy that was developed by members of expert community and received strong support in the Moldovan civil society.

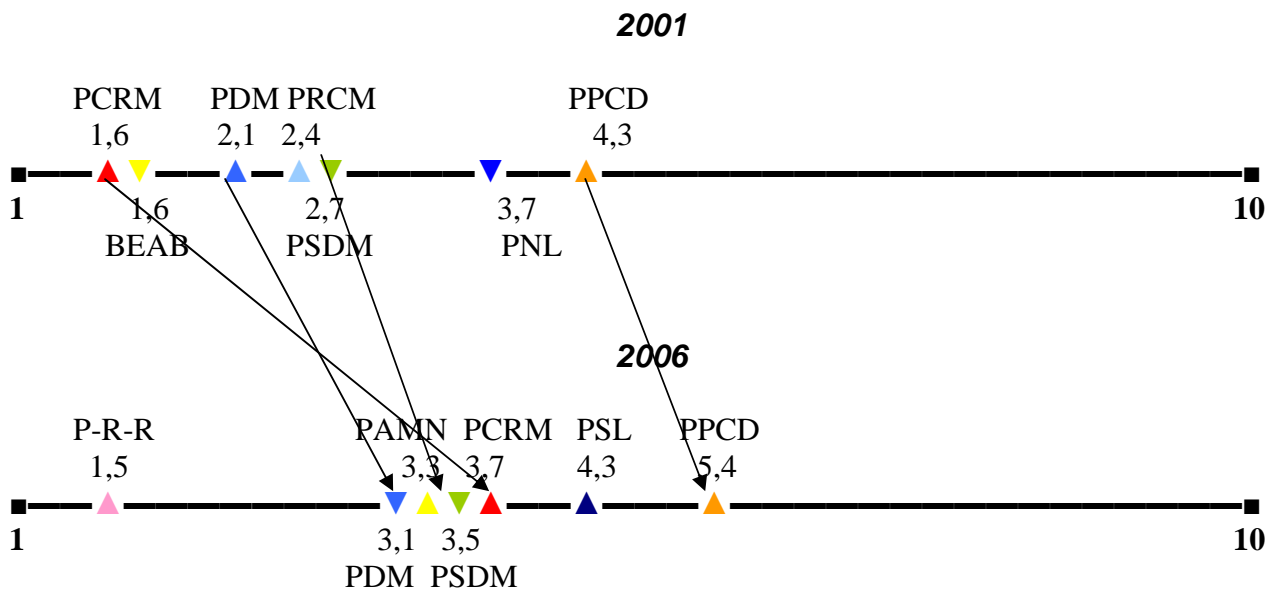
Use of force in the Transnistrian conflict.

Use of military force for solving secessionist conflicts is a strategy that the states dealing with separatism are interested to keep on their list of options. The Moldovan state is not an exception in this respect. Force had already been used during a short period in spring-summer 1992 when Moldovan police detachments and nascent military units launched an attempt to forcibly reintegrate a separated region. That experience turned to be very negative and led to the breakdown of negotiations and conflict escalation. The spring-summer 1992 period of military confrontation has also proved to have enduring legacies. The memories of conflict are frequently invoked to illustrate an argument or support a claim by politicians on both sides of the Nistru river.

Experts and party functionaries in our sample were asked to give estimates of party positions on the issue of use of force. The alternative ends of a continuum of possible policies on the use of force were defined on the 10-point scale as *force cannot be applied under any circumstances* **versus** *force can be applied if deemed necessary*:

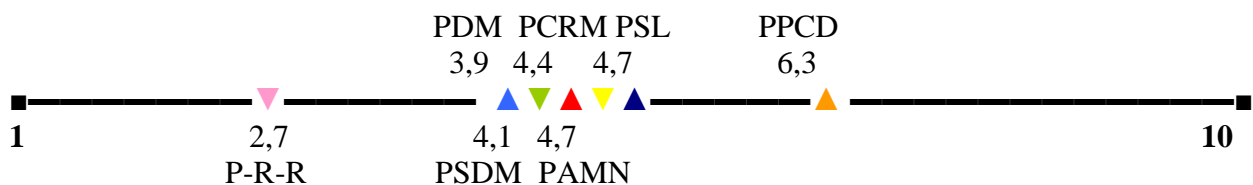
5. Possibility of using force for solving the Transnistrian conflict: *force cannot be applied under any circumstances* **versus** *force can be applied if deemed necessary*

5a. Changes in political parties' positions as perceived by expert community

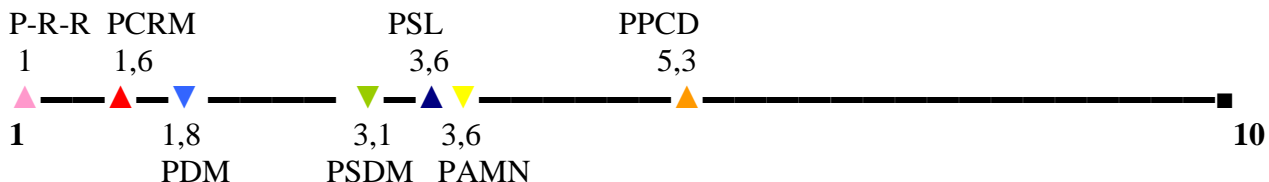


1 – force cannot be applied under any circumstances
 10 – force can be applied if deemed necessary

5b. Party elites' survey



5c. Party self-evaluation



Legend: PCRDM - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova; PAMN - Party "Our Moldova Alliance"; PPCD - Christians Democratic People's Party; PDM - Democratic Party of Moldova; SLP - Social-Liberal Party; PSDM - Social-Democratic Party of Moldova; P-R-R - Patria-Rodina-Ravnopravie; BEAB - Electoral Bloc "Braghiș' Alliance"; PRCM - Party of Renaissance and Conciliation of Moldova; PNL - National Liberal Party.

Source: European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Survey, Chisinau, February 2006.

A limited but consistent shift in positions of all major political parties, which were present on the political scene both in 2001 and 2005, is one unexpected finding from the expert survey. Graph 5a reveals that political parties have over time become, in the view of experts, more open to the idea of using force. This holds true both for the ruling party and opposition parties. The magnitude of change in the position of PCRM, which was initially put by experts almost on the no use of force endpoint of the scale, was substantially higher than in positions of other parties.

Expert scores for 2006 also suggest that positions of parties that are represented in parliament reflect a pattern which is similar to parties' positions on a number of previously discussed issues. The governing party, PCRM, occupies a median position among the parliamentary parties on the issue of use of force. Experts scored PSL and PPCD as more willing than PCRM to consider the use of force and PDM and PAMN as less willing than the governing party to do so. In the view of experts, policy distance among parliamentary parties on this issue is, however, not very significant. As **Graph 5a** indicates, the only possible exception is PPCD, whose position is significantly further to the right from the positions of the rest of parliamentary parties.

The scores from party elites' survey reported in Graph 5b support the thesis about similarity of parliamentary parties' positions on this issue. Party respondents see only minor differences in positions of parties represented in parliament, with the exception of PPCD. Party respondents' scores also put parliamentary parties more to the right on the scale than expert scores do. As a result, the mean of parliamentary parties' positions is almost at the middle of the scale.

Party elites' scores on positions of their own parties, which are given in **Graph 5c**, are consistently lower than the scores assigned to each of the parties by the respondents from the entire sample of party elites. It is obvious that most of main political parties in Moldova are interested in projecting an image of a dovish political force. This is especially true in the case of the ruling party whose members' scores produced an average of 1.6

While political parties display little polarization on the issue of use of force, which is highlighted by the fact the lowest polarization score in Appendix IV is recorded namely for this issue, expert opinions about the utility of using military force vary quite substantially:

*Table 5. Individual experts' self-placement on issue of **use of force**: force cannot be applied under any circumstances versus force can be applied if deemed necessary:*

| Expert | E1 | E2 | E3 | E4 | E5 | E6 | E7 | E8 | E9 | E10 | E11 | Average |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|---------|
| Evaluation | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 4 |

The positions of five experts who defined their stand on the issue with a score of 1 could be interpreted as fully excluding the option of using military force in the Transnistrian conflict. On the other end of continuum, two experts were equally resolute in their support for the use of military means. The rest of experts chose to identify their position as somewhere in between these two radical alternatives. Averaging self-placement scores of individual experts produces a value of 4, which implies that the experts' average position is close to the median position of parliamentary parties in 2006 as identified by experts in Graph 5a. This position implies that, while collectively shying away from the wholesome endorsement of use of force, neither political parties nor expert community exclude the possibility of employing the mechanisms of state coercion for dealing with the conflict.

Conclusion

This report provided a number of estimates of policy positions of political actors on Transnistria-related issues. These issues constitute a significant policy challenge for Moldova. The recently introduced changes to electoral legislation as well as the continuing decline in electoral popularity of the ruling communist party are likely to increase even further the competitiveness of Moldovan party system. Evaluating policy positions of political actors is important for advancing

our understanding of possible conflict settlement scenarios that the Moldovan party system is likely to generate.

Some of these possible scenarios will involve choosing from the range of potential policy options on issues that we tried to identify in this report. As data collected for the report indicates, there remained substantial differences in positions and preferences of individual political parties even immediately after the reaching of the so-called national consensus on approaches to the Transnistrian conflict was declared in the summer 2005. Our analysis also revealed substantial changes in parties' positions over time, which highlights the importance of appreciating the dynamic nature of party competition over such long-standing policy issues as the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.

As our presentation of research results has shown, we also consider the expert community as an important political force. The expert community possesses a considerable power to shape public opinion. This was especially evident in, but not limited to, the case of the public discussion on the issue of federalism. Thus, we conceptualized experts not only as observers but also as participants in the process of designing public policies. Maintaining the atmosphere of open public debate over alternative approaches to the Transnistrian conflict settlement is far from being a sufficient solution to the conflict. However, the continuation of such debate, which involves both politicians and experts, should improve chances of generating a long-lasting solution to the conflict.

(This questionnaire's respondents are anonymous. Information is collected for research purposes. The survey is conducted on behalf of ECMI, Flensburg, Germany)

1. Your party affiliation? _____
2. Elected party position _____
3. Region _____
4. Occupation _____
5. Age _____
6. Gender _____

Instruction: You will find a list of questions included into this questionnaire. Your answers to these questions will help us to evaluate policy positions of main Moldovan political parties. With regards to each of questions please

1. Indicate how important this specific issue is for your party
2. Indicate position of your party on this issue
3. Indicate positions that, in your view, other parties occupy on this issue

Questions:

2.1 Format of state organization: federal state *versus* unitary state

Some politicians think that Republic of Moldova should be a unitary state and accept only a very limited level of autonomy for Transnistria and Gagauzia. Other politicians are willing to consider a model of state organization that provides for a high level of autonomy for regions, including even a federal model of state organization.

- How important is this issue for your party?

Not important 1—2—3—4—5 Very important

- Please indicate positions that your party and other parties occupy on this issue

Federal state 1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10 Unitary state

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| A. Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| B. Party "Our Moldova Alliance" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| C. Christian Democratic People's Party | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| D. Democratic Party of Moldova | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| E. Social-Liberal Party | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| F. Social-Democratic Party of Moldova | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| G. Patria-Rodina-Ravnopravie | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Appendix II. List of the Transnistrian conflict-related issues rated by salience

The version of the questionnaire prepared for party politicians included a question about the importance of each separate issue for respondents' own political party. Respondents were asked to evaluate the degree of importance of individual issues on the 5-point scale, ranking each issue between two end points, defined as *not important* and *very important*:

| |
|--|
| Not important 1—2—3—4—5 Very important |
|--|

| | Issues | Parties | | | | | | | Mean per issue |
|----|---|---------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------------------|
| | | PCRM | PAMN | PPCD | PDM | PSL | PSDM | P-R-R | |
| 1 | Format of state organization | 4.9 | 4.7 | 5.0 | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 4.9 | 4.84 |
| 2 | Format of negotiation | 4.5 | 4.8 | 4.9 | 4.9 | 4.8 | 4.6 | 4.5 | 4.70 |
| 3 | Russian military presence in Transnistria | 4.5 | 4.5 | 5.0 | 4.6 | 4.8 | 4.5 | 4.9 | 4.70 |
| 4 | Nature of the Transnistrian conflict | 4.8 | 4.7 | 4.9 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 4.4 | 4.6 | 4.68 |
| 5 | Causes of conflict | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 4.8 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.67 |
| 6 | Use of force | 4.8 | 4.7 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 5.0 | 4.61 |
| 7 | Status of Transnistria | 4.9 | 4.4 | 4.9 | 4.3 | 4.7 | 4.1 | 4.8 | 4.58 |
| 8 | Legitimacy of the Transnistrian leadership | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.7 | 4.6 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.2 | 4.52 |
| 9 | Issue of demilitarization | 4.7 | 4.6 | 4.9 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 4.50 |
| 10 | Sequencing stages of conflict settlement | 4.7 | 4.3 | 4.9 | 4.1 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.44 |
| 11 | Conditions for holding elections | 4.7 | 4.4 | 4.7 | 4.2 | 4.7 | 4.2 | 3.7 | 4.38 |
| 12 | Status of Gagauzia | 4.3 | 4.1 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.7 | 4.31 |
| 13 | Participation of Romania in negotiations | 4.3 | 4.7 | 5.0 | 3.7 | 4.6 | 3.9 | 3.5 | 4.26 |
| | Grand mean, all issues | 4.65 | 4.55 | 4.79 | 4.40 | 4.62 | 4.40 | 4.48 | 4.55 |

Appendix III. Spread/Polarization on the Transnistrian conflict-related issues

| | Issues | Mean Party Position (based on the entire sample of respondents) | | | | | | | Standard Deviation |
|----|---|---|------|------|-----|-----|------|-------|--------------------|
| | | PCRM | PAMN | PPCD | PDM | PSL | PSDM | P-R-R | |
| 1 | Participation of Romania in negotiations | 4.4 | 7.3 | 9.2 | 6.0 | 8.8 | 7.0 | 1.8 | 2.60 |
| 2 | Russian military presence in Transnistria | 6.3 | 8.0 | 9.4 | 7.2 | 9.2 | 7.7 | 1.9 | 2.54 |
| 3 | Format of negotiation | 6.4 | 7.8 | 9.0 | 7.3 | 9.1 | 7.8 | 2.2 | 2.36 |
| 4 | Status of Transnistria | 5.5 | 7.2 | 8.9 | 6.2 | 8.3 | 6.9 | 2.1 | 2.25 |
| 5 | Legitimacy of the Transnistrian leadership | 7.7 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 7.7 | 9.3 | 8.0 | 2.7 | 2.23 |
| 6 | Format of state organization | 5.9 | 7.4 | 9.2 | 6.8 | 8.3 | 7.2 | 2.3 | 2.21 |
| 7 | Conditions for holding elections | 7.1 | 7.7 | 9.0 | 7.3 | 9.0 | 7.6 | 2.5 | 2.19 |
| 8 | Sequencing stages of conflict settlement | 5.7 | 7.5 | 8.4 | 6.6 | 8.6 | 7.3 | 2.6 | 2.04 |
| 9 | Causes of conflict | 6.7 | 7.9 | 9.2 | 7.1 | 8.8 | 7.6 | 3.2 | 1.97 |
| 10 | Nature of the Transnistrian conflict | 6.8 | 8.0 | 8.6 | 7.5 | 8.7 | 7.8 | 3.2 | 1.91 |
| 11 | Status of Gagauzia | 6.0 | 7.5 | 8.5 | 6.4 | 7.9 | 7.5 | 2.9 | 1.89 |
| 12 | Issue of demilitarization | 7.4 | 7.5 | 8.6 | 7.1 | 8.0 | 7.1 | 3.7 | 1.56 |
| 13 | Use of force | 4.4 | 4.7 | 6.3 | 3.9 | 4.7 | 4.1 | 2.7 | 1.08 |
| | Grand mean, all issues | | | | | | | | 2.06 |

Appendix IV. Profiles of Political Parties

The Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) is a political force that controls the government since 2001, when it overwhelmingly won the parliamentary elections (71 mandates out of 101) as well as the presidential ones. In the parliamentary elections held on 6 March 2005, PCRM has maintained its leading position, gathering 45.98% votes and obtaining 56 out of 101 parliamentary mandates. The majority status allowed the Communists to form a government and to succeed in re-electing their party leader, Vladimir Voronin, as the country's President. The official ideology of the party is the communist one and is based on the classical Marxist-Leninist doctrine. At the last congress of the Communist party in December 2004 the party's leadership expressed its willingness to adopt a Euro-Communist platform. The congress supported this idea, but the commission established for the revision of the political program has not presented its conclusions yet.

The founding congress of PCRM was held in October 1993. The new party declared itself as the successor of the Communist Party of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was declared illegal in 1991 following the failed coup in Moscow that took place on 19-21 August of 1991. The first elections that Moldovan Communists participated in were the 1995 local elections. PCRM ran in all elections held in Moldova (parliamentary, presidential, local) since then. The high point of Communists' electoral success was the 2001 parliamentary elections when they received 50.07% votes.

Vladimir Voronin (born in 1941), the founder and leader of the party, was twice elected by the parliament as President of the Republic of Moldova (2001, 2005). According to most surveys of public opinion, Voronin remains the most popular politician in the country. In the Soviet period he held a number of key positions in the republic's administration, including serving as the minister of internal affairs (1998-1990). During the first years of the independence, Voronin was actively engaged in efforts to legalize the Communist Party.

The Party "Our Moldova Alliance" (PAMN) is a relatively recent entrant to the Moldovan party scene. It played a leading role in the electoral Bloc "Democratic Moldova" (BDM), which also included the Democratic Party and the Social-Liberal Party. The bloc positioned itself as a main alternative to the ruling Communist Party in the March 2005 elections. BDM received 28.53% votes that translated into 34 parliamentary mandates. BDM disintegrated almost immediately after the start of a new parliamentary term. Alliance "Our Moldova" parliamentary faction initially controlled 23 mandates. The size of PAMN's parliamentary faction was reduced in the course of the parliamentary term and the faction controlled only 13 mandates by the end of 2006.

The party's official ideology is based on social-liberal doctrine. After a group led by the former prime minister Braghis who claims to have a social-democratic leaning broke off with the party, representatives of another faction, which is led by the current party leader Serafim Urechean, became even more dominant in different bodies of the party. The Urechean's faction claims to support a liberal model of economy. The Alliance "Our Moldova" was founded in July 2003 in result of a merger of three entities: Social-Democratic Alliance of Moldova (SDAM)⁹, Liberal Party¹⁰, Alliance of Independents of the Republic of Moldova¹¹. For a short period of time PAMN

⁹ The founding congress of SDAM was held in December 2001 based on the Party of Social Democracy "Ant" (1997). The SDAM was joined by the social-political movement "Plai Natal" (1999)

¹⁰ The Liberal party was established on the basis of the right-oriented parties that lost the 2001 elections: Party of Renaissance and Conciliation, Social-Liberal Union "Force of Moldova", National Peasant's Party of Christian-Democrats.

was joined by the People's Democratic Party of Moldova. The "Our Moldova" Alliance was established on the idea of consolidation of opposition forces and as a vehicle to contest communists' control of power in the 2005 parliamentary elections.

The current party chairman Serafim Urechean (born in 1950) held a number of important positions in the communist party's apparatus and the state administration during the Soviet period. He was a member of the first parliament of the independent Moldova (1990-1994). He served as a mayor of Chisinau between 1994-2005. His ascendance to the national political scene is generally linked to his service as a mayor.

Christians Democratic People's Party (PPCD) – a party that claims its membership in the Christian democratic party family is the main political and legal successor of the People's Front of Moldova. The Front was the main socio-political movement advocating Moldova's succession from the USSR during the 1988-1991 period. In the March 2005 parliamentary elections PPCD gathered 9.07% of votes and 11 parliamentary mandates respectively. This is the only party, which had parliamentary representatives in all parliaments of Moldova. The party's share of vote remained at the level of 8-10% throughout the post-communist period .

The Christian-Democrats went through several organizational stages in their development: People's Front of Moldova (1989) – People's Christian-Democratic Front (1992) – Christian-Democratic People's Party. Pro-Romanian orientation – the vision of Moldova's unification with Romania as an ultimate goal of Moldova's post-communist transition – was one of key motives of the party's political activity throughout the period of Moldova's independence.

The present leader of PPCD Iurie Roșca (born 1961) became the leader of Christian-democrats in 1994 succeeding the previous leader of Christian-democratic movement, the former prime minister Mircea Druc (since 1992). Rosca's background is in journalism. Since 1994 he served as a member of parliament through the consecutive parliamentary terms. Rosca became the deputy speaker of parliament in the aftermath of the 2005 parliamentary elections and his party's support for the re-election of the communist party leader Voronin as the country's president. This support proved to be a highly controversial issue among PPCD rank-and-file members.

The Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) was a member of the electoral bloc "Democratic Moldova" (BDM) that received 28.53% in the March 2005 parliamentary elections. PDM controlled 8 out of 34 parliamentary seats allocated to the electoral Bloc "Democratic Moldova" (BDM) as a result of elections. The party formed its own faction in the parliament from the very start of the 2005 parliamentary term.

According to the political program of party, PDM's ideological platform is based on social-democratic doctrine. DPM was established in 1997 and sought to provide parliamentary support for the new president Petru Lucinschi (1997-2001). The party's initial name – Movement for Democratic and Prosperous Moldova. The party withdraw its support from the president not long after the start of president Lucinschi's office term. The party was represented in the parliament during the 1998-2001 term. In the February 2001 parliamentary elections, DPM, which ran on its own, did not pass the 6% electoral threshold.

Dumitru Diacov (born in 1952) is the party's leader from the moment the party was found. During the Soviet period he held important positions in the apparatus of Communist youth organization (komsomol). His professional training is in journalism. In independent Moldova he started as an MP (1994-2001) and became the Speaker of Parliament during the 1998-2001 parliamentary term.

¹¹ This party is composed based on representatives of local public administration, who were in opposition to the ruling party.

The Social-Liberal Party (SLP) was also a member of the electoral bloc "Democratic Moldova" (BDM) that received 28.53% in the March 2005 parliamentary elections. SLP received 3 mandates out of 34 that were allocated to BDM after the elections. The SLP deputies withdrew from the bloc after the start of the 2005 parliamentary term.

SLP was founded in May 2001 on the basis of merger of three socio-political organisations: the Group of Social-Liberal Initiative (2001), the Women' Christian-Democratic League (1990) and the National Youth League of Moldova (1991). In December 2002 SLP was joined by the centre right Party of Democratic Forces (PDF), which had parliamentary representation during the first decade of independence (1994-2001).

SLP's doctrine is social-liberalism. SLP also declares as its priority Moldova's integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. The chairman of the party is Oleg Sereborean, a political science professor from one of the leading Moldovan universities.

The Social-Democratic Party of Moldova (SDPM) was the first party to promote social-democratic ideas in Moldova. In the March 2005 elections SDPM received only 2.92% and was not able to secure parliamentary representation.

The party doctrine is a social-democratic one. SDPM is a member of the Socialist International. The party co-operates with a number of European and CIS social-democratic parties. SDPM participated in all parliamentary campaigns in independent Moldova, securing between 2% and 4 % votes in each of the campaign. This, however, was not sufficient to gain representation in any of the Moldovan parliaments.

The founding congress of SDPM was held in March 1990. The following party leaders became the first co-chairmen: A.Coşeleu, O. Nantoi and I.Negură. In February 2004, Ion Muşuc, an influential member of Moldovan business community, was elected to the position of party chairman.

Patria-Rodina-Ravnopravie (P-R-R) [Motherland (in Romanian) – Motherland (in Russian) – Equal Rights (in Russian)] is a political alliance created on the basis of two parties: "Patria-Rodina" (chairman V.Abramciuc) and the republican socio-political movement "Ravnopravie" (chairman V.Climenco). These parties have not merged yet, but they position themselves as political partners ready to make this step. They ran separately in the 2005 parliamentary elections. Neither was able to pass the electoral threshold. The bloc "Patria-Rodina" received 4.97%, and the movement "Ravnopravie" – 2.83%.

Electoral bloc „Patria-Rodina” was made of two parties: Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova and the Socialist Party of Moldova. The Bloc's official program was the democratic socialism. The choice of the program accentuated P-R-R's differences from the official Marxism-Leninism of PCRM. Pro-Russian rhetoric in an important distinguishing feature of parties that formed this bloc. These parties are the only significant political actors that stand categorically against the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union.

The party of socialists “Motherland” ("Patria-Rodina") was established in 1997 (under the name of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova) as a result of departure from the Socialist Party of Moldova (SPM), established in 1992, of a group of moderate former members of the Communist Party of Soviet Moldavia. This group did support the idea of independent Moldovan statehood and was against the reestablishment of the USSR.

The republican socio-political movement "Equal Rights" ("Ravnopravie") was established in 1998. While the socialists focus their attention on some classical leftist appeals, Ravnopravie's main political focus is advocating interests of Russian and Ukrainian ethnical groups in Moldova.

The leaders of P-R-R are V.Abramciuc and V.Climenco. Both leaders, who are historians by training, came into politics from higher education institutions. Neither occupied important party or state administrative positions during the Soviet period.

The Electoral Bloc "Braghiș' Alliance" (BEAB) was an electoral bloc created to compete in the February 2001 parliamentary elections. The bloc received 13.36% votes in the elections. This bloc was created under the leadership of Dumitru Braghiș, Moldovan prime minister at that moment. A significant role in the creation of the bloc was also played by then President Petru Lucinschi (1998-2001). The bloc's faction in parliament lost some members but its core under Braghiș' leadership persisted throughout the parliamentary term.

BEAB's ideological stand could be defined as a social-democratic one, although the bloc did not present a coherent programmatic position. It was rather a coalition of parties whose ideological views were only loosely connected. BEAB included six parties of left and left-centre orientation (the socio-political movement "New Force", the Movement of Professionals "Speranta-Nadejda," the Socialist Party, the Labour Union, the Centrist Union and the Party of Social Democracy "Ant"). On the basis of BEAB parliamentary fraction and the PSD "Ant", the Social-Democratic Alliance (SDAM) was formed under the leadership of Braghiș. In 2003 SDAM merged with other parties to form "Our Moldova" Alliance. After Braghiș with a group of MPs left the AMN in the early 2006, he established Party of Social Democracy and was elected as its chairman.

Dumitru Braghiș belongs to the generation of 'komsomol' members. He started his career during the Soviet period but reached significant political positions only in the post-independence period.

The Party of Renaissance and Conciliation of Moldova (PRCM) ran independently in the February 2001 elections but was not able to enter the parliament. It received 5.89% votes, which was slightly below the required minimum of 6%.

PRCM didn't have a coherent political ideology but in general promoted ideas and values specific to the Moldovan rightist parties. The party was established in 1995 by a group of right-oriented MPs who left the Democratic Agrarian Party. The founder of the party was Mircea Snegur – the first President of the Republic of Moldova. In the early days of the party its fortunes were linked to the fortunes of president Snegur.

After the failure of an attempt to enter the parliament in 2001, party leaders undertook some actions to reform the party. As a result of merger with some other unsuccessful contestants of the 2001 elections a new right-oriented party emerged – the Liberal Party (2002). In 2003, Liberal Party co-founded PAMN (Party "Our Moldova Alliance").

The National Liberal Party (NLP) was an important representative of liberal political spectrum during the first decade of existence of Moldovan party system. NLP was established in 1993. The party claimed in its program to combine the liberal ideas with the goals of pan-Romanian revival. In the political history of the Republic of Moldova the national-liberals became known for their national patriotic projects and the rhetoric of unification (creation of the union between Romania and the Republic of Moldova).

NLP's electoral support throughout the period of its existence varied between 2%-3% of votes. After the electoral failure in 2001, NLP merged with other right-oriented parties to create PAMN (Party "Our Moldova Alliance"). NLP's best-known leader was the businessman M.Rusu.