

Transnistria: Formats for Negotiating the Conflict. Premises, Institutional Architecture, Successes, and Failures

Eugen STRĂUȚIU

Abstract: Our research aims to clarify the historical context in which the negotiation formats for the Transnistrian conflict were established, the founding documents, their evolution over time as a succession of productive stages and contested interruptions, their successes and failures and the reasons behind them, as well as possible options for correcting past shortcomings or eventually replacing the current formats with more effective ones. In this regard, we examine the “5+2” format, the “1+1” format, and the sectoral working groups. Currently, the first format is no longer functioning, having been suspended since 2022. The other two operate irregularly and have not produced mutually agreed-upon results. Instead, they merely highlight the divergences in the approaches adopted by Chisinau and Tiraspol regarding the main issues on their agenda: Romanian-language schools on the eastern bank of the Dniester; ensuring freedom of movement across the demarcation line; advancing the recognition by Chisinau of school diplomas issued in Tiraspol; implementing a system of license plates for vehicles in Transnistria approved by the government of the Republic of Moldova; and taxing businesses in Transnistria in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Moldova. The hypotheses we test are as follows: first, that the presence of the Russian Federation in the conflict has been counterproductive, both as a party to the conflict and as a mediator; second, that the Russian-Ukrainian partnership, which until 2022 was systematically manifested to the detriment of the interests of the Republic of Moldova, cannot be resumed under current circumstances; and third, that the existing negotiation formats require reconsideration, whether through maintaining them unchanged, reforming them, or abandoning them altogether.

Keywords: Transnistrian conflict, negotiation formats, the “5+2” format, the “1+1” format, the sectoral working groups.

Eugen STRĂUȚIU

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
E-mail: eugen.strautiu@ulbsibiu.ro
ORCID: 0009-0003-7055-0171

Conflict Studies Quarterly
Issue 56, July 2026, pp. 63–84

DOI: 10.24193/csq.56.4
Published First Online: July 03, 2026

Introduction

After prolonged political dissensions and conflicts throughout 1990–1992 related to the identity of the new state emerging from the ruins of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, the prospect of an armed resolution became increasingly likely at the beginning of 1992. On one side were the centralizing forces mobilized by Chisinau, consisting of police units and civilian formations in the absence of a still-unorganized national army. On the other side were the forces under the command of the secessionist authorities in Tiraspol, comprising their own civilian formations, Cossack detachments arriving from the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and local units of the 14th Army commanded from Moscow.

The military phase of the conflict began on the night of March 1–2, 1992, when secessionist forces attacked and occupied the Dubasari Regional Police Station, which was subordinate to Chisinau. Within a few days, fighting spread to the localities of Cosnita, Cocieri, Pohrebea, Dorotcaia, Speia, Tocmagiu, and Malaesti. The decisive moment in the conflict came during the battles fought on June 19, 1992, in Tighina (Bender), when armored units of the 14th Army intervened on the side of the secessionists. Subsequently, the secessionist forces, strongly supported by Cossack detachments, launched artillery attacks against the positions of the forces coordinated from Chisinau on the plateaus of Cocieri, Cosnita, and Chitcani, including areas located on the right bank of the Dniester (Străuțiu et al., 2023).

In a situation of mutual exhaustion and fragile balance on the battlefield, negotiations were organized between the political leaders of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova, which ended with the *Agreement on the Principles of Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniester Zone of the Republic of Moldova*, signed on 21 July 1992. The first article stipulates:

1.1. From the moment of signing the Agreement, the parties to the conflict undertake to take all necessary measures for the total cessation of fire, as well as any armed actions, against each other; 1.2. With the ceasefire, the parties to the conflict proceed to withdraw their armed forces units and other formations, combat equipment, and weaponry, to complete this process within seven days. The purpose of such disengagement is to create a security zone between the conflicting parties (...).

The start of systematic negotiations is stipulated in the art. 5.2, in the following formula:

The parties to the conflict will immediately proceed to negotiations to resolve the issues related to the return of refugees to their places of origin, the provision of assistance to the population of the affected districts, and the reconstruction of economic facilities and housing. The Russian Federation will provide the necessary support in this regard (Gvidiani, 2020a, p. 71).

Over time, the negotiations came to encompass increasingly diverse and specialized issues, requiring a more elaborate institutional framework. In chronological order, the principal

negotiation platforms have been the following:

1. **The “1+1” format**, involving the President of the Republic of Moldova and the leader of the self-proclaimed secessionist republic, the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic. Subsequently, negotiating authority was also delegated to the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration of the Republic of Moldova and to the so-called “Minister of Foreign Affairs” in Tiraspol.
2. **The sectoral working groups**, whose mandate and institutional structure were established through negotiations conducted within the “1+1” format.
3. **The “5+2” format**, which evolved from the earlier “3+2” format and represents the internationalization of the negotiation process through the inclusion of additional international actors as mediators and observers.

We would like to point out that the names of the mentioned formats, except for the “5+2” format, were not used at that time and are the innovation of analysts, following the wide acceptance of the “5+2” format (which, officially, is called the “Permanent Conference on Political Issues within the Negotiation Process for the Transnistrian Settlement”).

A superficial reading of the texts that provide the institutional framework for the negotiations can produce false impressions about the real atmosphere of the negotiations before, during, and in the subsequent interpretation and application of the agreed understandings. We will witness a permanent adversarial positioning, setting traps, raising the tone, using violent expressions, and systematic accusations. These have also been transferred, in part, to the level of analysts, whether they are journalists or professional researchers. As G. Bianov observed (2009, p. 8),

The political, ideological, and expert-level battles between the two sides are difficult and usually boil down to the fact that neither side, under any circumstances, gives up even the smallest part of its position. This rather destructive model of communication has taken root in the consciousness of the elites. It prevails over the public consciousness and is very widespread in the expert community. Based on this model, self-sufficient ideological stereotypes have been formed, which are currently able to subjectively demonstrate to us the insufficient desire of the parties to make progress in the negotiation process. (Bianov 2009, p. 8)

It is a challenge that we make every effort to resist in our research, by systematically and comparatively consulting all relevant points of view (political and analytical) and formulating assessments with maximum objectivity.

Literature Review

Fortunately for our interest in documenting the negotiation process, we have at our disposal several bibliographic collections published in volumes, which, at the level of the year in which they were offered to the public, list the most important scientific contributions to the Transnistrian issue.

The first project of this kind belongs to the researcher from Chisinau, Lidia Prisac, and was printed in 2005. The second edition, completed and updated, appeared on the market in 2021 (Prisac, 2021). Meanwhile, as a project of the Laboratory for the Analysis of the Transnistrian Conflict at the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Eugen Străuțiu offered a *Transnistrian Bibliography* (2019), which inventories 88 volumes, 71 chapters in volumes, 222 articles in scientific journals, 173 studies and reports, 19 scientific journals, and 23 volumes of memoirs (Străuțiu, 2019). Finally, three decades after the military operations on the Nistru River, the Agency for History and Military Science and the “Andrei Lupan” Scientific Library (Institute) offer the volume *The Armed Conflict on the Nistru River. Bibliography*, which, in an economy of 308 pages, systematizes official documents, collections of documents and normative acts, monographs, articles, and master’s/doctorate theses (Manolache, 2022).

Unfortunately for our research, a systematic investigation of the general literature yields very few works specifically dedicated to negotiation formats in the Transnistrian conflict. Analytical approaches to negotiations on the Transnistrian issue are most often framed under the concepts of “*Transnistrian settlement*” or the “*settlement process*”. Under these labels, the activities conducted within the negotiation platforms between Chisinau and Tiraspol are often overshadowed by broader analyses focusing on the various settlement scenarios proposed by international actors, such as the *Yushchenko Plan* and the *Kozak Plan*. Among the negotiation platforms, scholars from Chisinau and abroad tend to focus disproportionately on the “5+2” format, which is generally examined from a chronological perspective and only rarely subjected to deeper analytical scrutiny.

Under these circumstances, our research relies primarily on a thorough examination of documentary collections — most notably the collection compiled by Alin Gvidiani, published in 2020 by Technomedia Publishing House in Sibiu — as well as on general works such as that of Eugen Străuțiu (2017), which discusses the principal dimensions of the Transnistrian conflict, including a chapter of several pages devoted to the negotiation platforms.

Of real use is the last of the three volumes printed in 2009 in Chisinau, under the title *Moldova–Transnistria: Eforturi comune pentru un viitor prosper. Procesul de negocieri*, even if the last chapters analyze rather general aspects of the conflict (Matveev et al., 2009). Among the articles in scientific journals, even if each one offers a small number of pages, the contributions of Aurelian Lavric (2012) on the state of negotiations in the “5+2” format (2012) and Marius Șpechea on the latest developments in the activity of sectoral working groups (2017, 2018) are especially useful.

Regarding our possibility of relying on a theoretical framework regarding the negotiation and mediation of frozen conflicts, we are surprised by the very small number of contributions. Most of the time, frozen conflicts are listed separately, through the contribution of different authors in dedicated chapters. Even if information regarding negotiation formats can be extracted (not easily), the comparative perspective is lacking, as is the case with the

volume coordinated by Michael Emerson, printed in Brussels and London. (2020). The same thing happens with thematic issues of publications, such as the collection of texts *Resolving Frozen Conflicts. The Challenges of Reconciliation*, put under the aegis of “Per Concordiam. Journal of European Security and Defense Issue”, offered by the George Marshall European Center for Security Studies (2020). In the same category (from the perspective of our interest in negotiation formats) are also single-author volumes, from which we can select information and short analyses (Albulescu, 2022, pp. 111–112, 150–151).

Instead, we have substantial contributions on the mediatory behavior of international actors in the cases of Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia. The role of the OSCE in the protracted conflicts is discussed in the volume edited by Klaudia Báňaiova & Samuel Goda (2018); the role (or lack thereof) of the European Union in the Transnistrian conflict and those in the Caucasus is discussed by Hans Martin Sieg (2012); the patterns of involvement of the Russian Federation in this conflict are analyzed by Andrew Sprague (2016).

An almost unique case through the breadth and depth of comparative analysis, the report provided by Stefan Wolff (2021) under the aegis of the Stockholm Center for Eastern European Studies, comparatively analyzes the mechanisms for resolving conflicts and their negotiation formats in the post-Soviet space. We will analyze some of his conclusions below.

The Main Negotiation Formats: Institutional Organization, Chronological Evolution, And Negotiated Content

Negotiation platforms, as a whole, “represent institutional organizations that bring the parties in conflict to the dialogue table, in mutually agreed formulas, for the resolution of fundamental files or technical files that are the subject of different points of view” (Străuțiu, 2017, p. 196). The system of negotiation platforms was established over time, as the issues to be resolved became more numerous and more complicated. The general trend, as new files were included in the negotiation platforms, was that of the ever-increasing technicalization of the institutional framework and the rules of negotiation.

The “1+1” format

This negotiation platform emerged naturally through direct talks between the highest-ranking representatives of Chisinau and Tiraspol. Initially, in the tense atmosphere that followed the military operations, the Republic of Moldova was represented by its president or prime minister, while Tiraspol was represented by the “*Transnistrian leader*” (the term commonly used in Chisinau), who in Tiraspol is referred to as the “*President of the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic*”. Later, working meetings were also organized between the political representatives responsible for the Transnistrian settlement process

in Chisinau and Tiraspol. Typically, these representatives are the Minister (later Deputy Prime Minister) for Reintegration from the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the “*Minister of Foreign Affairs*” from Tiraspol.

In practice, coordinating the negotiation teams constitutes the primary responsibility of the Tiraspol representative, since the so-called “*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*” cannot officially operate in international relations due to the unrecognized status of the self-proclaimed republic. This “*ministry*” neither negotiates treaties nor oversees embassies and consulates, and its representatives are not received in official international meetings. Consequently, the negotiation expertise of the Tiraspol representative is exercised almost exclusively within negotiation formats with Chisinau, whereas the representatives of Chisinau benefit from considerably broader experience acquired through managing the international relations of the Republic of Moldova.

Discussions were held in 2016 regarding the possible expansion of this format to include the leadership of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the “*Supreme Soviet*” in Tiraspol; however, these proposals did not materialize (Străuțiu, 2017, p. 200).

The first consistent result of the bilateral negotiations at the summit (in contemporary language, the term of English origin would be “summit”) was marked on 8 May 1997, in Moscow, where Petru Lucinschi and Igor Smirnov signed the *Memorandum on the Basis of Normalization of Relations Between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria*. Representatives of the OSCE, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine were present. The document stipulates that the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria are equal parties in the process of building a common state, a principle that will lay the foundation for later categorically contradictory positions of both parties. Chisinau will position the negotiation process under the sign of the supreme goal of state reintegration, while Tiraspol will consider that its status as an equal to Chisinau refers to its political independence. In the same context, Presidents Boris Yeltsin and Leonid Kuchma also signed a joint declaration, in which they considered the memorandum an important step towards a fair and comprehensive settlement of the Transnistrian dispute. Its provisions cannot contradict generally accepted norms of international law and cannot be interpreted or applied in contradiction with existing international treaties.

As a logical consequence, on 24 May 1997, the political leaders in Chisinau and Tiraspol decided to establish several commissions to coordinate and ensure the negotiation process. These commissions met regularly for three months (a total of six meetings), after which the negotiation process was effectively blocked.

A relative return to normality occurred at the beginning of 1998. On 17 February, in the presence of delegates from Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE, Lucinschi and Smirnov signed a protocol on the preparation of draft documents related to customs insurance, foreign trade, education, combating crime, the mechanism for Ukraine’s participation in the peacekeeping operation, and the commissioning of the Dubăsari road bridge (Boțan, 2009, p. 20).

The series of bilateral negotiations continued in July 1999, when Lucinschi and Smirnov signed a package of documents on social and economic cooperation. A few days later, at another meeting, the two leaders (this time together with representatives of the three mediators) adopted a joint declaration on building relations between the parties based on the principle of a “common border, economic and social space, defense, and law”.

After the election of Vladimir Voronin as President of the Republic of Moldova, the “1+1” format continued under the previous terms. On 9 April 2001, Voronin met with Smirnov to discuss the state and evolution of the negotiation process, the reactivation of expert groups, the validity of previously signed documents, accession to the Russia–Belarus Union, granting Russian the status of state language, mutual recognition of documents issued by the relevant institutions of both parties, the free activity of the mass media in both Moldova and Transnistria, and the broadcasting of television programs (Boțan, 2009).

The “1+1” format continued to be the main negotiation platform in the following years. For example, during 2003, protocols were signed regarding the permanent establishment of joint meetings on political issues starting from February 2003; planning of future activities and consultations and exchanges of opinions were held on the text of the statement of the President of the Republic of Moldova of 10 February 2003; joint approach with the OSCE to the issue of the functioning of Moldovan schools in the Transnistrian region and organization of a meeting of representatives of statistical structures; proposals for candidacies in the composition of the Joint Constitutional Commission; railway issues on the left bank of the Nistru River; the situation of schools with teaching in Romanian (Gvidiani, 2020a, p. 30).

The “1+1” format continued to be the main negotiating platform in the following years. But in 2005–2006, bilateral meetings were overshadowed by negotiations in the newly established “5+2” format, which took over the negotiating agenda of previous years. After the suspension of the recent format, meetings between Voronin and Smirnov were resumed, including during the first visit of the president of the Republic of Moldova to Tiraspol, on 24 December 2008 (Stănescu et al., 2012).

Given that pro-Western President Nicolae Timofti (2012–2016) adopted a political line hostile to the Tiraspol regime and avoided bilateral negotiations, the context for relaunching the summit format was created only after the election of Igor Dodon as head of the Moldovan state. Between 2017 and 2020, several meetings were organized, one of which was held at the state residence in Condrîța (28 July 2020). From the official press release of the Presidency of the Republic of Moldova, we find that the topics discussed refer to the preparations for the educational process in the new school year, the movement of students and teachers, the promotion of the topic of telecommunications, criminal cases, and banking issues, and the opening, as soon as possible, of a Bender-Varnița trolleybus line. At the same time, “The parties reiterated the importance of the peacekeeping operation on the Dniester as a guarantor of peace and security for citizens and agreed to take joint steps to prevent the situation in the Security Zone from worsening” (Presedinte, 2020).

During Maia Sandu's presidential term, starting in 2020, summit meetings were refused, with the responsibility for technical negotiations being transferred to the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration. The completely unfavorable atmosphere for negotiations, which arose due to the Russian-Ukrainian war and the different positions of Chisinau and Tiraspol towards the two belligerents, led to a small number of contacts and very few results. Meetings between Oleg Serebrian and Valeriu Chiveri, respectively Vitaly Ignatiev, took place every year, but in the general atmosphere that Deputy Prime Minister Serebrian already signaled after the February 2022 meeting: "Unfortunately, although there were so many topics, the dialogue did not lead anywhere, that is, for the moment we have blockages in all directions. It was rather an exchange of positions on several topics that concern us" (Valentina Ursu, 2022).

An interesting chapter of the "1+1" format, which is already the subject of articles published in scientific journals, is labeled "football diplomacy". On August 24, 2010, Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat traveled to Tiraspol to attend the football match between Sheriff Tiraspol and Basel. In this informal context, the Prime Minister met with Igor Smirnov to discuss issues on the bilateral political agenda. At the end of September, Filat was again present in Tiraspol, for a Sheriff's match with Dinamo Kyiv; the trip was presented by Smirnov as a result of his official invitation (Popov, 2021, p. 26). Beyond the novel aspect of the semi-official format, easily interpretable as official or unofficial depending on political interest, there remains no consistent evidence of concrete results of this type of "negotiations".

Looking back on the negotiating style and agendas of the two sides in the "1+1" format, we conclude that the pro-Russian presidents (primarily Igor Dodon, but also Petru Lucinschi and Vladimir Voronin) were more open to accepting the institutional framework of bilateral meetings with the leaders in Tiraspol, and manifested itself more favorably towards the agenda of the Tiraspol regime — including by consolidating the status of Russian troops on the left bank of the Dniester. In contrast, the pro-Western presidents Nicolae Timofti and Maia Sandu disregarded this format, delegating to the government officials responsible for the reintegration issue the negotiation of the stringent technical aspects, based on clear political positions regarding the obligation of the state to reintegration. The conciliatory policy of the first three mentioned here did not yield better results than the hard line of the others; on the contrary, it was an opportunity for Tiraspol to score points towards independence. The agendas of the two parties remained permanently contradictory. Chisinau was interested in resolving the normalization of the activity of schools with teaching in the Latin script, the cessation of pressure on all territorial subdivisions of Moldovan institutions (police, penitentiaries, forestry enterprises, etc.), ensuring free movement, the cessation of unilateral actions in the Security Zone and intimidation of human rights activists, unblocking farmers' access to land located along the Tiraspol–Camenca route, the regulation of international mandatory auto insurance certificates "Green Card" in the Transnistrian region, the reduction of utility tariffs for consumers under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Moldova, etc. During this time,

Tiraspol focused on formulas for obtaining recognition of diplomas issued by its own education system and car license plates in local format, evading payment of tax obligations in Chisinau for Transnistrian economic agents, obtaining freedom to market production internationally, canceling criminal prosecutions carried out for crimes related to secession by the authorities in Chisinau, etc. (Străuțiu, 2017, p. 201).

The sectoral working groups

The idea of institutionalizing groups of experts working in administrative positions in Chisinau and Tiraspol, who would work together to identify solutions to disputes in their areas of competence, was born during the “1+1” meetings in 1997. These were initially understood more as a tool for strengthening trust, with the mission

to complement the political dialogue with technical activity formats within which the expertise of specialists in specific fields is mobilized, to develop and formulate models of reasoned and informed solutions, so that they can subsequently be submitted for approval to decision-makers. Thus, maintaining an interaction between professionals from different specialized fields without the need for interpretative collaboration with structures not empowered by law on the other side (Șpechea, 2018, p. 115).

This is how the *Agreement on the Foundations of Organizing Socio-Economic Interaction* (10 November 1997) was signed, with a content of 12 articles, which provide for the creation of a Unified Commission on socio-economic interaction, whose numerical and nominal composition are decided by the parties. This structure is intended to generate mechanisms for solving existing problems, with meetings taking place in rotation in Chisinau and Tiraspol. The decisions are of a recommendatory nature. Under these conditions, 20 permanent working groups have been established (Gvidiani, 2020a, p. 22). These were specialized for forecast the socio-economic development of the Parties; commercial-economic and technical-scientific cooperation in the industrial and agro-industrial complex; cooperation in the energy field and for ensuring mutual payments for the consumption of energy resources; transport cooperation; cooperation in the field of construction and in the communal household; cooperation in promoting economic reforms, privatization and public property management; cooperation in the field of informatics, post and communications; improvement of the economic legislation and the control over its observance; standards, metrology and technical surveillance; geological exploration and mineral resources; cooperation in financial-currency, budgetary-fiscal and banking systems; cooperation in customs matters; use of natural resources and the protection of the environment; use of labor resources and social protection of the population; statistics and information assurance; development of the healthcare sphere; development of education, the training of scientists and scientific and pedagogical staff; development of culture; measures to ensure public order; actions in foreign trade activity meetings (Șpechea, 2017, pp. 150–151).

A milestone in the institutional evolution and the attributions of sectoral groups was marked in 2007, when Government Decision No. 1178 of 31 October 2007 approved the list of working groups and their composition (obviously, from the Moldovan side), deciding that “The working groups will involve in their activity, if necessary, representatives of other public administration authorities and civil society”. The Government places the activity of these sectoral groups under the coordination of the Minister of Economy and Trade, and the Minister of Reintegration. The annex lists seven working groups, each dedicated to the institutions that will delegate their representatives there. Today, this is the only legal document presented by the Bureau for Reintegration Policies (the specialized structure within the State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova, which coordinates and technically ensures the entire negotiation process) on its official website (Guvernul Republicii Moldova, 2007).

On 9 September 2011, it was agreed by political representatives in the city of Bad Reichenhall, the *Joint Regulation of Expert Groups (Work) for Strengthening Confidence-Building Measures and Developing Interaction*. The eleven points stipulate that the activity of the working groups is coordinated by political representatives; they are in charge of developing proposals and solutions to sectoral problems and are composed of specialists in the field; their leaders are responsible for maintaining contacts and forming the agenda, informing each other no later than one week before the convening of the next meeting; meetings take place at least once every two months; the meetings are chaired consecutively, and the decisions received are formalized in minutes drawn up by the party that led the meeting within three days of the day it was held; after signing, the minutes are submitted to the leadership of the parties for approval of the necessary decisions; representatives of mediators and observers may participate in the expert meetings, being informed in advance (Gvidiani, 2020a, p. 23).

Within this regulatory framework, the structure of the working groups has undergone several changes. In 2017, for example, there were 13 active sectoral working groups and two sectoral subgroups, as follows: economy + working subgroup on banking issues; environmental protection; education; agriculture and sanitary-veterinary issues; road transport and infrastructure development; rail transport and communications; telecommunications and postal services; civil status documents and population documentation + working subgroup for human rights; customs issues; social issues and humanitarian aid; health protection; combating crime and emergency situations; and demilitarization and strengthening security (Șpechea, 2017, p. 152).

Three working groups whose activity is missing or insignificant are also noted: combating crime; civil status documents and population documentation; and demilitarization and strengthening security (the latter being completely non-functional) (Șpechea, 2017, p. 154).

Today, the number of working groups listed on the website of the Reintegration Policy Office is 15. Six of them had no activity at all between 2024 and 2026, and two others had only one meeting during the same three-year period (Guvernul Republicii Moldova, 2007).

In attempting an overall assessment of the efficiency of the negotiation process within the system of sectoral working groups, it is important to note that compromise solutions were identified on important areas of disagreement, which were subsequently implemented. These include issues related to Romanian-language schools on the left bank of the Nistru River, the activity of Moldovan farmers on their lands across the Nistru River, the acceptance of an officially recognized vehicle registration plate format on the right bank of the Dniester River, and the apostille of graduation diplomas in education coordinated by Tiraspol by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, among others.

The dialogue on these issues, which have direct implications for the interests and way of life of residents on both banks of the Dniester River, has been systematically accompanied by political connotations, and the discussions have been lengthy.

On the other hand, it seems obvious that the inactivity or insignificant activity of the three working groups listed above, with reference to 2017, also has political explanations. The lack of meetings in the format of the “demilitarization and strengthening of the security” group is favorable to the Tiraspol regime, which avoided concessions on essential points for its independence program. The fight against crime requires collaboration between law enforcement and judicial bodies in Chisinau and Tiraspol — this would have represented a form of recognition of official structures of the secessionist republic by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, and the political price is too high. A similar problem arises in the case of civil status acts and population documentation, which can only be implemented in partnership (i.e., recognition and acceptance of an equal status) with civil status structures on the left bank of the Dniester River.

The large number of working groups that have not met or have not produced any results in the last three years indicates a general crisis of this format, explainable by the general atmosphere of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the suspension of the “5+2” format, and the very poor results in the “1+1” format.

Finally, we must recognize the important, but still limited, potential of the sectoral groups format to advance the settlement of the Transnistrian issue.

The “5+2” format

The internationalization of the negotiation process of the Transnistrian conflict has been a reality and a necessity since the moment of signing the *Agreement on the Principles of Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniester Zone of the Republic of Moldova*. The two sides equally wanted to attract international actors favorable to their interests in reintegration and independence to the negotiations. At the same time, rejecting actors with global or regional capacity represented a risky option for both Chisinau and Tiraspol, even if it could be unfavorable to them, because the great powers had instruments to sanction the two parties, both in the “soft-power” and “hard-power” formulas.

Thus, already from the first years of the “1+1” format, we notice the presence of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe around the bilateral negotiations, which provide press statements and even position papers on the meaning and results of the negotiations between Chisinau and Tiraspol. Some authors even consider that, starting in 2002, a “3+2” format was institutionalized, which included the OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine as mediators (Rosa, 2021, p. 5).

In this perspective, the founding document of the new negotiation format is the *Protocol of the Meeting of Mediators in the Transnistrian Settlement From the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the OSCE*, signed in Bratislava, including by the parties, on 20 February 2002. There, within a Protocol and a Regulation, the creation of the “Permanent Conference for Political Issues Within the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transnistrian Settlement”, in a pentilateral format (Chisinau and Tiraspol — parties, OSCE, Russian Federation, and Ukraine — mediators) was registered. The main objective of this platform is to develop, coordinate, and resolve written agreements useful for the final report to be approved by the political leadership of the parties to the comprehensive settlement of the Transnistrian issue. The Conference meetings will take place, as a rule, no less than once every 2 months in Chisinau, Tiraspol, Moscow, Kyiv, Vienna, or other locations previously agreed upon by the members.

The first round of negotiations took place in Kyiv in July 2002. After which, a protocol was drafted and signed in Chisinau (August 22). Protocols followed, signed in Chisinau, Tiraspol, or Moscow, in total 21, between 29 July 2002 and 27 September 2005, which are listed in the collection of documents provided by Alin Gvidiani (2020a).

The “3+2” format was expanded based on consultations between representatives of the parties to the conflict and mediators from the OSCE, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine, held on 27–28 September 2005 in Odesa. There, the European Union and the United States of America were invited to participate in the negotiation process as observers. The observer status was formally specified based on an OSCE protocol on the rights and obligations of observers in the negotiation process: they have the right to participate in official meetings and to speak during them, but cannot intervene with questions, sign the adopted documents, or participate in decision-making. The new negotiated format was called “5+2”, and its first meeting was scheduled for 27–28 October 2005, in Chisinau and Odesa.

In Odesa, the parties also discussed the issue of monitoring the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, that of international monitoring of the military-industrial complex of Transnistria, as well as the prospects for organizing democratic elections in Transnistria. Also, there, the Russian representative handed the participants a document with the proposals of the state he represents on the Transnistrian issue (Boțan, 2009, p. 41).

Additional details regarding the rights and obligations of observers in the negotiation process were agreed upon through a separate protocol, which formulated in 12 points that observers have the following rights: to participate in official working sessions at all levels of

the negotiation process; to vote and intervene with positions; to ask and answer questions; to make comments; to propose the convening of meetings within the negotiation process, but not to convene them; to hold separate consultations with the parties and mediators; and to propose the organization of meetings and seminars that may facilitate the resolution of issues on the negotiation agenda. The parties may ask observers questions during meetings and request their expertise; however, observers do not sign documents in the negotiation process, do not participate in decision-making, and do not chair meetings (Gvidiani, 2020a, pp. 22–23).

The newly established format met on 15–16 December 2005 in Chisinau and Tiraspol. The participants adopted a final protocol, according to which, by the next round of negotiations, the OSCE was to prepare a draft mandate for an international mission to assess the situation in Transnistria with a view to holding democratic elections in the region. The Transnistrian side was to provide complete information on the troops and weapons it possessed, in accordance with the package of draft confidence- and security-building measures presented to the OSCE in July 2005. The participants addressed the OSCE Chairperson with a request to send a mission to Transnistria to monitor the military-industrial complex in the region and discussed the situation in the security zone, on which the OSCE issued a series of recommendations to the parties (Boțan, 2009).

On 26–27 January 2006, a new round of negotiations took place in Tiraspol and Chisinau. Here, the limitations of the “5+2” format became evident. The round ended with the signing of a joint protocol. However, William Hill, head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova, expressed reservations about the results: “The discussions are proceeding with difficulty. On each issue, each side has its own point of view, which is radically different from the position of the opposing side”. Similarly, Chisinau’s representative in the negotiations, Moldovan Minister of Reintegration Vasile Șova, expressed dissatisfaction, noting that even in the third round of negotiations, “no decision has been reached” and that “all issues are being postponed, while committees and working groups are being formed that do not produce results”. By contrast, the representative of Tiraspol — foreign minister’ Valeri Litkai — expressed satisfaction with the negotiations, particularly with the Ukrainian side’s decision to suspend the application of unified Moldovan–Ukrainian customs procedures (Boțan, 2009). These statements clearly indicate that the negotiations in the current format tend to address the interests of Tiraspol rather than Chisinau and, in general, do not sufficiently serve the needs of conflict resolution.

Predictably, on 27 February 2006, when a new round of negotiations began, it was not finalized. The following day, the Moldovan delegation abandoned the talks, issuing a press release expressing concern about the lack of progress, particularly regarding the free movement of citizens and goods in the security zone in view of the upcoming spring agricultural works. On the same day, separatist leader Igor Smirnov issued a decree on the use of agricultural land in the Dubăsari district, which exacerbated tensions. Residents and businesses in villages under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Moldova would have access

only based on certificates of “special preferential registration of rights to use agricultural land,” granted on the basis of lease contracts concluded with the Transnistrian authorities, while the transportation of goods was conditioned on taxes paid in accordance with “Transnistrian legislation” (Boțan, 2009, p. 61).

Leaving the “5+2” format, the Moldovan side continued separate negotiations with the Russian Federation, without the participation and information of the other mediators and observers, which created concern among its Western partners. They received information about the content of the negotiations and the new “package” approach strategy of the Government of the Republic of Moldova only in June 2007, from the presidency. In a press conference (29 June, 2007), he briefly explained to the press the concept of a “package approach” that would include determining the status of Transnistria, guarantees for the population, confidence-building measures, demilitarization mechanisms, Moldova’s preservation of neutrality, and issues related to the recognition of Transnistrian property.

Therefore, the “5+2” format did not meet again until the end of 2011, even though there were informal discussions during 2010-2011.

The first official round, after the resumption, took place from 30 November to 1 December 2011 in Vilnius, and was dedicated to the procedural principles and the common acceptance of the new organizational framework of the negotiation process. The discussions focused on technical aspects, resulting in the signing of documents (Străuțiu, 2017, p. 197).

The most important results in terms of specifying the negotiating framework were produced by the Vienna round of negotiations on 18 April 2012, which organized the negotiation topics into three thematic baskets:

1. Socio-economic issues, which include aspects related to ensuring free movement, customs procedures, telecommunications, the financial-banking and fiscal system, property, transport and road infrastructure, education, culture, agriculture, environmental protection, health care, etc.
2. General legal, humanitarian, and human rights aspects, which include respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, stimulation of dialogue at all social levels (including civil society activity and interpersonal contacts), media freedom, general legal issues (including in relation to previously assumed commitments), etc.
3. Comprehensive regulation, including institutional, political, and security issues (Gvidiani, 2020b, p. 17).

Continuing the negotiations for the functional consolidation of the format, the Protocol of 13 July 2012, signed in Vienna, officially approves the agenda of official meetings and the principles and procedures for conducting negotiations. Five working principles were established within the “5+2” format:

1. Participants will refrain from submitting preconditions.
2. The parties will demonstrate goodwill and will conduct a consecutive and constructive dialogue.

3. Participants will conduct negotiations from positions of equality at the dialogue table and will demonstrate mutual respect, benefiting from the right to submit any proposals or to discuss any topic considered to be important for the negotiation process.
4. The principle “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” shall apply to the negotiation of any document.
5. The parties will implement the agreed-upon agreements in good faith.

Among the procedural aspects, those referring to the organization of the work in the format of the Permanent Conference six times a year and the fact that the implementation mechanisms must be established in the content of each agreement (Gvidiani, 2020b, p. 17).

Under the auspices of the Ukrainian OSCE Chairmanship, another five official meetings of the “5+2” format took place during 2013 (Lviv: 18–19 February, Odesa: 23–24 May, Vienna: 16–17 July, Brussels: 3 October, Kyiv: 25–26 November) to establish the implementation mechanisms (Gvidiani, 2020b, p. 17).

From the Vilnius meeting until 6 June 2014 (the last official round in 2014), the “5+2” format produced 13 meetings, the discussions being focused on consultations on technical aspects, with the signing of relevant documents in this regard. In 2014, three rounds of negotiations already planned were postponed due to Tiraspol’s refusal to participate. In the assessment of officials from Chisinau, “Tiraspol’s logic was clear, open measures of protest were being exercised against the rise of the European integration processes from both the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and conditionalities were being drawn up aimed at diverting the Chisinau authorities from the course of association with the European Union”. In 2015, only one special consultation meeting in the “5+2” format was managed in Vienna, on 21 April (Gvidiani, 2020b, p. 16).

The revitalization of the analyzed format occurred at the Berlin meeting, on 2–3 June 2016. The meeting was the first after a two-year break, and it listed eight negotiation topics:

1. Gura Bicului Bridge: Reopening the bridge connecting Gura Bicului and Bicioc.
2. Diploma Apostille: Recognition and apostille of diplomas issued in Transnistria by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova.
3. Telecommunications: Ensuring and restoring fixed and mobile telephone connections between the two banks.
4. License Plates: Introducing a mechanism for neutral license plates for vehicles in the Transnistrian region.
5. Agricultural Land: Unhindered access of farmers from the Dubasari district to agricultural land beyond the Tiraspol–Camenca route.
6. Schools with Latin script: Ensuring the proper functioning of Moldovan schools on the left bank of the Dniester River.
7. Freedom of Movement: Eliminating barriers to the movement of citizens.
8. Criminal cases: Resolving criminal cases opened against officials and citizens on both sides.

During 2017 and 2018, two more rounds of negotiations took place in the “5+2” format, in Vienna and Rome. Both events reconfirmed the concentration of efforts of the parties in the selective implementation of the “Berlin Plus Package” and the avoidance of discussions on other political or security issues (such as the installation of joint checkpoints on the Moldovan–Ukrainian border or the exercises to force the Dniester River by Transnistrian troops with the participation of the Russian contingent in Tiraspol). Under these conditions, the meetings served as a platform for updating the action plan agreed in Berlin and less to ensure the coordination of “small steps” within all three negotiating baskets (Mogîldea, 2019, p. 2).

Ultimately, the special conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war put the entire negotiation format — which anyway seemed exhausted from the point of view of resolving the political interests of the two sides — on hold. Part of the agenda was transferred to the “1+1” format and sectoral working groups, but even there, the results are not significant.

It is obvious that the functioning of the “5+2” format has created conditions for solving technical, administrative, and everyday life problems of the communities affected by the conflict, but not by itself; the successes have been shared with the other two formats, “5+2” offering a broader political framework and more solid international guarantees. Moreover, this platform has solved the need of international partners to be involved and to expose their own interests and positions. The criticisms are nevertheless justified, especially those referring to the inefficiency of the “small steps” policy and the exclusion of political and security issues from the agenda (Țugui, 2012), according to the third negotiating basket.

Conclusions

The main factor influencing successes and failures in the negotiation process remains the special positioning of the Russian Federation within the conflict, which is equally a party (signatory of the 1992 Agreement), mediator, and military involved (through the Technical Operational Group it maintains in Tiraspol, which is under the command of the Western District of the Ministry of National Defense in Moscow). These different and contradictory roles provide a special ability to influence the settlement process. Most of the time, the negotiating agendas of Moscow and Tiraspol within the “5+2” format are identical or complementary.

Moscow’s “original sin”, accused as such by many Moldovan and Western politicians and analysts, is its positioning during the military phase of the conflict. Today, in Chisinau but also in many Western circles, the prevailing view is that the conclusion of military operations through the *Agreement* signed by Moscow and Chisinau in 1992 shows that we are witnessing an inter-state conflict, and not an inter-ethnic conflict. This war took place between two “abruptly asymmetric states”, with Tiraspol being built as a “proxy for Moscow” (Popescu, 2013, p. 121).

In the following years, the Russian Federation assumed a patron-client relationship with the secessionist republic, which it protects from political, economic, and security points of view (Devyatkov, 2017, p. 18). On several occasions, international bodies such as the European Court of Human Rights confirmed (Saca et al., 2006, p. 99). In its judgments in 2016, the ECHR found 31 violations of the European Convention on Human Rights. These relate in particular to two articles — violation of the right to a fair trial and ill-treatment or use of excessive force by state agents (Rotaru, 2025, p. 289).

Several nuances regarding the position of the Russian Federation should be noted. First, it has not offered international recognition to the secessionist republic (unlike other cases, such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Donetsk, or Luhansk), remaining firm in formally recognizing the independence and integrity of the Republic of Moldova. On the other hand, the different Russian power centers behave differently. Strong support for Transnistria's independence initiatives comes from the State Duma, where numerous members have contacts with Tiraspol and visit Tiraspol. Deputies addressed interpellations to the executive, requested hearings, and delivered speeches favorable to the Transnistrian regime. In 1995, the State Duma refused to ratify the Moldovan-Russian agreement on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova and recommended that President Yeltsin consider recognizing Transnistria's independence.

Under these circumstances, Aurel Lavric's reasoning seems irreproachable:

Therefore, the first confusion of the authorities in Chisinau is related to the misunderstanding, as is also evident in the "5+2" format (of quasi-non-existent negotiations, agreed upon by the Moldovan authorities) of the actors involved in the conflict in the east of the Republic of Moldova. Although the Memorandum on the settlement of the conflict (which was, in fact, a ceasefire agreement) of 21 July 1992, was signed exclusively by the Presidents of Moldova M. Snegur and Russia B. Yeltsin (thus, these are the two parties in the conflict, since the troops of the regular Russian army and paramilitary formations of Russian Cossacks fought against the Moldovan state police), today Russia appears in the above-mentioned format as a mediator (what kind of "neutral mediator" can it be?) between the Republic of Moldova and a part of it where there is a Russian military occupation regime, led by Russian citizens (2012, p. 29).

In essence, the negotiations conducted between Chisinau and Tiraspol for three and a half decades show a continuous struggle to score points on issues of limited importance, of a technical nature, each positioning and signed document being understood by the parties as an advance towards the reintegration of the Republic of Moldova (from Chisinau's perspective), respectively towards the formal and definitive achievement of independence (from Tiraspol's perspective).

Under these conditions, negotiations were a real chance to prevent the conflict from re-entering a "hot" phase, but they inevitably led relations between the two parties towards a "frozen conflict" (synonyms with "unresolved conflict", "postponed conflict", or

“protracted conflict”). It is obvious that the indefinite extension of the negotiations suits, from a tactical point of view, Tiraspol and its ally, the Russian Federation, which is buying time for the institutional consolidation, in small steps, of the secessionist republic.

In detail, several other issues should be noted that prevent real developments towards resolving the most important issue of the negotiations, the political one.

First of all, Tiraspol’s systematic refusal to address the political issue (in terms of the “5+2” format: the third package of negotiations) cannot be countered in the current organization of the negotiations. Sanctions for lack of activity in certain negotiation chapters are not provided through protocols and regulations. Only certain negotiation strategies and tactics can solve the problem. A valid strategic option for Chisinau remains the “package” solution of key issues of a political, economic, social, humanitarian, and security nature (Străuțiu, 2017, p. 199). By contrast, the Transnistrian side tried to dissociate the first two “baskets” of problems from the third, even going so far as to establish a “5+2 Social-Humanitarian Format” as an instrument for ensuring equitable basic elements from a humanitarian, social, economic, civil, and legal point of view for the vital activity of the population on the right and left bank of the Dniester. Within this format, a special program for the socio-economic and humanitarian rehabilitation of the region would have been implemented, which includes the application of a package of socio-economic transformations and the involvement of the parties in projects with social, legal, economic, informational, and infrastructure purposes (Ignatiev, 2009, p. 38). Of course, this proposal had no chance.

Secondly, decision-making by consensus offers the parties the opportunity to block initiatives that are inconvenient in terms of their goals of reintegration/total secession. Even so, there is no solution; there is no other solution than negotiation until consensus, and the three formats analyzed by us remain the main options for resolving everyday problems between Chisinau and Tiraspol.

Thirdly, the “small steps” strategy that worked in favor of Tiraspol, in all negotiation formats, is no longer relevant. The international context no longer offers time for maneuver for minor issues, when the region and the entire world are restructuring as a hierarchy of power, including through new borders. In the absence of the “5+2” format, neither of the other two formats has offered any political progress or any solution to everyday problems after 2022. The pace of the negotiation sessions, the conflictive atmosphere around the few discussions, clearly indicate that decisive solutions in the Transnistrian conflict can no longer be postponed, without serious consequences. In a rational version, these should occur peacefully. It is no coincidence that several recent statements by the leadership in Chisinau evoke the possibility of reuniting the Republic of Moldova with Romania. In terms of negotiation, this is the “exit tactic”: from now on, you will negotiate with Romania, that is, with NATO and the European Union.

Finally, the issue of the Russian Federation’s positioning in the conflict and in the negotiation process remains of utmost importance. Of course, including as a negotiating tool, the Moldovan side will always have to denounce the incompatibility of Russia’s roles

as a party to the conflict, mediator, and ally of one side. But, in a realistic assessment, solid and long-term solutions cannot be decided in contradiction to the interests of the Russian Federation. The alternative of returning to military operations will appear immediately, especially in the context in which Russia needs Transnistria as a strategic base in the war with Ukraine and its possible further developments. A chance to close the conflict could arise outside the current negotiation formats, at the level of negotiations (formal or informal) that will take place to close the war in Ukraine. The Western partners of the Republic of Moldova could adopt the same “package” strategy, from which the Republic of Moldova would either remain reintegrated or part of Romania.

Positioning ourselves above the separate evaluations of each actor in the negotiation process (who may consider a loss suffered by one of the partners a success) as an independent evaluator of the functionality and results of the sum of the three formats analyzed, we list a new set of assessments and conclusions.

1. From a procedural point of view, the three formats offer sufficient, coherent regulations that promise maximum chances for a continuous, results-oriented operation. In fact, too much of the content of the negotiations referred precisely to the formulation of principles and regulations, and too few successful problem completions were scored.
2. The different or divergent interests of the actors caused discontinuities and failures. They often abusively extended or deliberately misinterpreted previous commitments, leading the negotiation process to deadlock. For example, the unanimously accepted principle of ensuring free movement in the Security Zone is translated by the Moldovan side as an obligation to lift the checkpoints organized by the Tiraspol regime as a “border” and free access for Moldovan farmers to work their agricultural lands across the Dniester. Meanwhile, the Tiraspol authorities demand the free movement of its “officials” in the Republic of Moldova and from there to foreign countries, even if they are prosecuted for acts related to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, but also the free movement of cars registered in Tiraspol, according to internationally unrecognized procedures.
3. In terms of results related to the main objectives, the balance sheet seems positive, but in a nuanced manner. The essential goal of preventing the re-emergence of war has been achieved — at least up to this point. The other essential goal, to which all recognized international actors subscribed — the reintegration of the Republic of Moldova, by granting a special status to Transnistria — was not resolved. On the contrary, the negotiations on this package have been systematically boycotted by the Transnistrian side, without any solution being identified within the current negotiation formats. However, as a general trend, the Transnistrian case seems to be the most successful, compared to the others in the Soviet space. If we take a look at the Nagorno Karabakh case, there are not even the principles of negotiation that could ever be established, the parties stubbornly refusing, one after another, the “Package Plan”, the “Step-by-Step” approach, the “Common State” plan, the “Land Swap” proposal, or the “Madrid Principles” (Wolff, 2021, p. 6).

4. In terms of the prospects of the negotiations leading to a definitive solution to the conflict, the results look very bad, not for reasons inherent to the negotiation formats, but because of the international context, which puts two major actors (the Russian Federation and Ukraine) at war and positions the two parties in contradictory conflict towards this war.

Even without this major external factor having occurred, we must note, together with Stefen Wolff (2021, pp. 8, 11, 13), that the comparative analysis of the success of negotiation formats in cases of “frozen conflicts” in the post-Soviet space leads to three major findings: agreement on non-political issues is possible; success on non-political issues does not automatically spill over into political issue area and does not necessarily prevent a resurgence of violence; for settlements to be sustainable, they need to be negotiated by the conflict parties.

It does not sound encouraging and does not seem enough to continue to believe in the chances of success of negotiations on frozen conflicts, because

Decades of lack of progress have created entrenched interests of all sides in the non-settlement of the protracted conflicts and/or in settlements that are neither feasible nor viable. In this sense, the existing negotiation formats, by merely simulating conflict settlement negotiations, have lost their sense of purpose and their sense of what an actual settlement of any of the protracted conflicts would look like (Wolff, 2021, p. 15).

For the Transnistrian case, the conclusion is perfectly valid. Ideas can be formulated to improve the framework of negotiations by attaching the expertise of non-governmental organizations, professional organizations of lawyers, and other interested actors (Romania, first of all, as an actor separate from the European Union and the OSCE, just as the Russian Federation and Ukraine are separate actors and OSCE members at the same time). However, with so many substantial changes, we will talk about other negotiation formats, and these will depend mainly on the power relations at the end of the Russian–Ukrainian war, which risks expanding at any time and fundamentally transforming the current aspect of the Transnistrian conflict.

References

1. Albulescu, A. M. (2022), *Incomplete secession after unresolved conflicts. Political order and escalation in the Post-Soviet Space*. Routledge.
2. Báňaiová, K., & Goda, S. (Eds.). (2018). *Frozen ground: Role of the OSCE in protracted conflicts. Recommendations for Slovak OSCE chairmanship*. Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association.
3. Bianov, G. (2009). Reglementarea transnistreană: Vectorul „occidental” și cel „estic” al compromisului [Transnistrian settlement: The ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ vectors of compromise]. In D. Matveev, G. Șelari, E. Bobkova, & B. Cseke (Eds.). *Moldova – Transnistria: Eforturi comune pen-*

- tru un viitor prosper. Procesul de negocieri [Moldova–Transnistria: Joint efforts for a prosperous future. The negotiation process] (pp. 7–18). Cu Drag.
4. Boțan, I. (2009). *Reglementarea transnistreană: o soluție europeană*. Adept.
 5. Devyatkov, A. (2017). Russia and Transnistria in a patron-client relationship. *Anuarul Laboratorului pentru Analiza Conflictului Transnistrean*, 1, 17–22.
 6. Emerson, M. (Ed.). (2020). *Beyond the frozen conflict. Scenarios for the separatist disputes of Eastern Europe*. London: CEPS, Brussels, and Rowman & Littlefield International.
 7. George Marshall European Center for Security Studies (2020). *Frozen conflicts. The challenges of reconciliation*. Per Concordiam.
 8. Guvernul Republicii Moldova (2007). *Reglementările în domeniu* [Regulations in the field]. <https://gov.md/ro/grupurile-de-lucru>.
 9. Gvidiani, A. (2020a). *Documente și acte normative referitoare la procesul de reglementare transnistreană* [Documents and normative acts related to the Transnistrian settlement process]. TechnoMedia.
 10. Gvidiani, A. (2020b). *Culegere de articole pe problematica transnistreană (2016-2020)* [Collection of articles on the Transnistrian issue (2016–2020)]. Artpoligraf.
 11. Ignatiev, V. (2009). Evidențierea costurilor conflictului prin crearea „Formatului social-umanitar 5+2” [Highlighting the costs of conflict by creating the ‘5+2 socio-humanitarian format’]. In D. Matveev, G. Șelari, E. Bobkova, & B. Cseke (Eds.). *Moldova – Transnistria: Eforturi comune pentru un viitor prosper. Procesul de negocieri* [Moldova–Transnistria: Joint efforts for a prosperous future. The negotiation process] (pp. 38-51). Cu Drag.
 12. Lavric, A. (2012). Formatul 5+2 din perspectiva esenței conflictului: Necesitatea modificării [The 5+2 format from the perspective of the essence of the conflict: The need for modification]. *Anuar Științific*, 10, 28–34.
 13. Manolache, C. (Ed.). (2022). *Conflictul armat de la Nistru* [The armed conflict on the Dniester]. F.E.-P. “Tipografia Centrală”.
 14. Mogîldea, M. (2019). Încotro ne duc „pașii mici”? [Where are ‘small steps’ leading us?] *Notă Analitică IPRE*, 4, 1–6.
 15. Popescu, L. (2013). The futility of the negotiations on Transnistria. *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 9(2), 115–126.
 16. Popov, A. (2021). Sports diplomacy of the Republic of Moldova: Forms and specificity of manifestation. *Știința Culturii Fizice*, 37, 24–30.
 17. Presedinte. (2020, July 28). *Președintele Republicii Moldova a avut o întrevedere cu liderul Transnistriei* [The President of the Republic of Moldova held a meeting with the leader of Transnistria]. <https://presedinte.md/presa/presedintele-republicii-moldova-a-avut-o-intrevedere-cu-liderul-transnistriei>.
 18. Prisac, L. (2021). *Istoriografia separatismului transnistrean (1989–2005), Ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită* [The historiography of Transnistrian separatism (1989–2005), 2nd revised and expanded edition]. Lexon-Prim.
 19. Rosa, V. (2021). The Transnistrian conflict: 30 years searching for a settlement. *SCEEUS Reports on Human Rights and Security in Eastern Europe*, 4, 1–16.

20. Rotaru, I. (2025). Regiunea separatistă din stânga Nistrului – Un focar actual al criminalității violente [The separatist region on the left bank of the Dniester – A current hotspot of violent crime]. In *Republica Moldova în contextul noii arhitecturi de securitate regională, Chișinău, Moldova, 24 mai 2024* (pp. 284–301). Agenția pentru Știință și Memorie Militară.
21. Saca, V., Țveatkov, N., & Baibus, M. (2006). Rolul arbitrilor în sistemul relațiilor politice de conflict și de consens în spațiul post-sovietic: Cazul Transnistriei [The role of arbitrators in the system of political relations of conflict and consensus in the post-Soviet space: The case of Transnistria]. *Moldoscopie*, 34, 97–107.
22. Sieg, H. M. (2012). *The EU's role or absence in "frozen conflicts" in Transnistria and Caucasus*. German-Nordic-Baltic Forum.
23. Sprague, A. (2016). *Russian meddling in its near abroad. The use of frozen conflicts as a foreign policy tool*. Institut Barcelona – Estudis Internacionals.
24. Stavilă, I. (2009). Evoluția reglementării conflictului transnistrean [The evolution of the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict]. In I. Șarov & I. Ojog (Eds.), *Evoluția politicii externe a Republicii Moldova (1998-2008)* [The evolution of the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova (1998–2008)] (pp. 153–176). Cartdidact.
25. Stănescu, V., Stănescu, D. A., & Dănilă, C. (2012). Negocieri diplomatice pentru soluționarea conflictului transnistrean – Studiu de caz [Diplomatic negotiations for the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict – A case study]. *Buletinul Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”*, 1, 1–21.
26. Străuțiu, E. (2019) *Transnistrian bibliography*. TechnoMedia.
27. Străuțiu, E., Roper, S. D., Crowther, W. E., Zabarrah-Chulak, D., Juc, V., & Hamilton, R. E. (Eds.). (2023). *The armed conflict of the Dniester, three decades later*. Peter Lang.
28. Șpechea, M. (2017). The sectoral working groups – Innovation and efficiency in Transnistrian Settlement. *Anuarul Laboratorului pentru Analiza Conflictului Transnistrean*, 11, 134–147.
29. Șpechea, M. (2018). Evoluții și perspective în reglementarea conflictului transnistrean – contribuția grupurilor sectoriale de lucru [Developments and prospects in the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict – The contribution of sectoral working groups]. *Anuarul Laboratorului pentru Analiza Conflictului Transnistrean*, 2, 113–121.
30. Țugui, E. (2012). Nesustenabilitatea negocierilor privind reglementarea conflictului transnistrean sau de ce securitatea contează [The unsustainability of negotiations on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, or why security matters]. *Buletin de Politică Externă a Moldovei*, 48, 1–5.
31. Ursu, V. (2022, February 18). *Oleg Serebrian: În formatul 1+1, dialogul cu Tiraspolul este dificil* [Oleg Serebrian: In the 1+1 format, dialogue with Tiraspol is difficult]. Radio Europa Liberă Moldova. <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/oleg-serebrian-%C3%AEn-toate-direc%C8%9Biil-e-avem-blocaje/31710533.html>.
32. Wolff, S. (2021). *Conflict-solving mechanisms and negotiation formats for Post-Soviet protracted conflicts: A comparative perspective*. Stockholm Center for Eastern European Studies.