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Module 4. Eastern Europe

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MODULE 4. EASTERN EUROPE

Overview

Background

Contents This module focuses on the work of the OSCE in :

- Belarus
- Ukraine
- Moldova



Belarus

Belarus at a glance



Area	81,000 square miles
Location	Belarus is landlocked. It borders on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Russia to the north, northeast, and east · Ukraine to the south · Poland to the west · Lithuania and Latvia to the northwest
Climate, terrain, and natural resources	<p>Climate The climate of Belarus is humid and moderately continental.</p> <p>Terrain The terrain is flat and low-lying, with many lakes and rivers. A third of the land area is covered by swamp, another third by forest.</p> <p>Natural Resources Potatoes, grains, flax, and sugar beet are grown. There are no significant natural resources apart from wood and peat, the main local source of fuel.</p>
Capital	The capital of Belarus is Minsk.
Population	10 million

Ethnic composition of the population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Belarusians 78% · Russians 13% · Poles 4% · Ukrainians 3% 	<i>Many people in the southern area of Belarus have a mixed Belarusian-Ukrainian identity and dialect. They are called Poleshchuks.</i>
Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Belarusian · Russian 	<i>The Belarusian language belongs to the eastern branch of the Slavic group of the Indo-European family of languages. It is written in an adapted form of the Cyrillic script that is used for Russian. Although the official state language is Belarusian the language in most common use is Russian.</i>
System of government	In formal terms, Belarus has evolved from a parliamentary into a presidential republic. In practice, the political system is a presidential dictatorship with a democratic veneer.	
Head of state	The first post-independence head of state was parliamentary chairman Stanislav Shushkevich. The current president is Alexander Lukashenko.	
Currency	The currency of Belarus is the Belarusian Ruble.	<i>The Belarusian Ruble is popularly known as the Zayats (hare), the animal that appears on the one-ruble banknote. Another animal that appears on Belarusian banknotes is the buffalo, a national symbol.</i>
Standard of living	GDP per capita in Belarus is roughly \$4,000, about 10 per cent of the U.S. level.	

Historical Background of Belarus

1386-1569, Belarus was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

From 1386 to 1569, Belarus was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a large multi-ethnic state that stretched from the Baltic to what is now western Ukraine. Its official language was Belarusian. So, despite its name, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is regarded as a precursor of present-day Belarus. Belarus' flag and emblem are indeed based on those of the Grand Duchy.

1569 Belarus absorbed into the Kingdom of Poland

In 1569, the Grand Duchy was absorbed into the Kingdom of Poland. As a result, Belarus came under strong Polish influence. In the 17th century, Poland fought for control of Belarus against an expanding Russia. When in 1795 Poland was finally divided up between Russia, Prussia, and Austria, Belarus was incorporated into the Russian Empire.

Belarusian nation

Intellectuals in Belarus started to think of themselves as belonging to a Belarusian nation about 1850. However, the Russian government suppressed expression of Belarusian identity, and the nationalist movement remained weak. Especially for the peasants, religious affiliation was more important than ethnic identity. Most Belarusians, like most Russians, belonged to the Orthodox Church, but a sizable minority were Roman Catholic, reflecting the historical influence of Catholic Poland.

In March 1918, an independent Belarusian People's Republic was proclaimed, made possible by the chaos that followed the Russian Revolution. In 1920-21, Poland and now Soviet Russia, again fought over Belarusian territory. The newborn Belarusian republic was crushed, and the treaty that ended the Polish-Soviet war divided Belarus in two. Western Belarus came under Polish rule, while eastern Belarus became the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (Belarusian SSR), one of the USSR's union republics.

Soviet government encouraged the development of Belarusian culture

In the 1920s, the Soviet government encouraged the development of Belarusian culture in the part of the country under its control, while the Polish government tried to suppress all expression of Belarusian identity in the part under its rule. This helps explain the strength of pro-Russian and pro-Soviet attitudes in Belarus.

War devastated Belarus

In 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact led to Nazi Germany's occupation of Poland (except for western Belarus) and the Soviet annexation of western Belarus, which was incorporated into the Belarusian SSR. In 1941, the Nazis overran Belarus as they invaded the Soviet Union. The war devastated Belarus, leaving its cities in ruins and its population reduced by one quarter.

Steady Russification

After the war, the cities of Belarus were rebuilt and its economy restored. By the 1970s, a new industrial base was taking shape, including textiles, motor vehicles, chemicals, and electrical equipment. Belarus' industry was completely integrated into the USSR economy and dependent on Russia and other Union Republics for fuel and other supplies. The republic underwent steady Russification, so that by 1980 over a quarter of Belarusians no longer used Belarusian as their primary language.

Gorbachev's impact in Belarus

In 1986, Gorbachev's moves to liberalize the Soviet system opened the floodgates of public protest in Belarus. Demonstrators demanded higher status for the Belarusian language and protested against the policies that caused the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in April 1986. Chernobyl is on the Ukrainian side of the Belarus-Ukraine border, but Belarus was worst affected by radioactivity because of the direction of the wind following the accident.

Belarusian Popular Front

In 1988 the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) was established, and became the main organization behind the protest movement. In the March 1990 elections, many BPF candidates won seats in the Supreme Soviet of the Belarusian SSR and entered into a power-sharing arrangement with representatives of the old establishment.

In July 1990 the Supreme Soviet adopted a Declaration of State Sovereignty that proclaimed the Belarusian SSR a neutral state and a nuclear-free zone. Belarusian was declared the state language.

Republic of Belarus

After the collapse in August 1991 of the hard-line coup in Moscow, Belarus declared full independence. The Belarusian SSR was renamed the Republic of Belarus. The scientist Stanislav Shushkevich, who was close to the BPF, was appointed chairman of the Supreme Soviet, which made him head of state (there being no presidency in Belarus at that time). In December 1991, Shushkevich met with President Yeltsin of Russia and President Kravchuk of Ukraine at a hunting lodge near Minsk to formalize the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Domestic Politics in Belarus

Parliamentary republic

In the early years of independence, Belarus was a parliamentary republic. A multiparty system quickly took shape. At first the political scene was polarized between a bloc of "national democrats" on one side and the communists and their allies on the other. Later there emerged a third "centrist" bloc.

- The main organization of the national-democratic bloc was the BPF, led by Zyanon Paznyak. The bloc included several other parties—notably, the Social-Democratic Union, to which Shushkevich belonged.
- The largest party was the Party of Communists of Belarus, which sought the restoration of the Soviet Union.
- Another left-wing party was the Agrarian Party, which supported Belarusian independence.
- The leading centrist party, the United Civic Party, was founded in 1995. The centrists supported democracy and economic reform, but opposed Belarusian nationalism and favored close integration with Russia.

Belarus' first presidential election

In March 1994, the parliament adopted a new constitution, creating a presidency with extensive powers. But Belarus' first presidential elections, held in the summer of 1994, had results that the framers of the constitution had not expected. The winner, with 82 per cent of the vote, was a former collective farm chairman called Alexander Lukashenko, who had only recently begun to gain popularity as a campaigner against corruption. Later he himself was accused of corruption.

Lukashenko

Lukashenko moved quickly to consolidate his position. He filled the government with trusted loyalists, brought the media under his control, and reintroduced press censorship. In fall 2002 three journalists were sentenced to jail terms for criticizing the president.

Lukashenko proposed that the parliamentary elections scheduled for May 1995 be accompanied by a referendum. The referendum was to grant Russian equal status with Belarusian as a state language, approve economic integration with Russia, and give the president the right to dissolve parliament in a crisis.

The electorate endorsed the referendum propositions, but the elections were undermined by severe restrictions on campaigning and a media blackout. The poll was invalidated on grounds of low turnout. International monitors judged the elections "neither free nor fair," leading to the suspension of Belarus' application to join the Council of Europe.

Evidence that 1995 election results were falsified

New elections were finally held late in 1995. There was evidence that the results were falsified. In January 1996, the new parliament convened and elected Agrarian Party leader Semyon Sharetsky as its chairman. In 1996 jailings of opposition activists began. Paznyak and another BPF leader sought political asylum in the United States.

Presidential

The extension of presidential powers culminated in November 1996, when yet another

powers

constitution was approved by referendum. Presidential powers were now virtually unlimited.

- The Constitutional Court lost its independence.
 - Parliament was to comprise an elected lower chamber, the House of Representatives, with only 110 members, and an upper chamber or Senate, the Council of the Republic, with 64 members, some appointed by the president and some by local authorities.
 - As initial members of the House of Representatives, Lukashenko selected 110 of his supporters, mostly representing rural areas, from among the deputies of the old parliament.
 - Another 60 deputies of the old parliament set up the Citizens' Committee for Protection of the Constitution, with Sharetsky at its head. Sharetsky and his colleagues were later forced to take refuge in Lithuania, where they set up a government-in-exile.
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OSCE, Council of Europe, and European Parliament concerned

While electoral institutions have not been formally eliminated, political conditions in Belarus today are close to those of a dictatorship. The OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament have expressed concern at the poor human rights situation in Belarus. There have been revelations of the existence of a government death squad that has assassinated about thirty opposition figures since it was set up in 1997.

OSCE monitors found the 2001 election failed to meet international standards

New presidential elections were held in September 2001. The main opposition candidate was head of the Trade Union Federation Vladimir Goncharik. According to the official results, Lukashenko was re-elected with 76 per cent of the vote. According to an independent count, Lukashenko had obtained only 46 per cent. OSCE monitors found that the election failed to meet international standards.

Lukashenko is considering holding a constitutional referendum to allow him to run for a third term as president in 2006.

Economic situation

The economic situation is very difficult. According to a World Bank report in 2002, Belarus' economy is the least reformed in the CIS. The State is the dominant economic sector, resulting in inefficiency at the plant level. State ownership has, however, deterred the large scale asset-stripping and other corrupt practices that accompanied privatization in some other CIS countries.

Belarus has also been able to shield its inefficient economy thanks to Russia, which subsidized Belarus directly with cheap energy and indirectly by accepting barter in mutual trade.

Ethnic Relations in Belarus

Ethnic relations

Ethnic relations have not posed serious problems in Belarus. Most Belarusians do not see the main ethnic minority, the Russians, as culturally alien or a threat to national identity.

Language

The relative status of the Belarusian and Russian languages is a sensitive issue. However, it

is primarily a matter of dispute not between Belarusians and Russians, but rather between more and less Russified sections of the Belarusian population:

- Russified Belarusians, represented by the communists and the centrists, emphasize the fraternal links between Russians and Belarusians. They want Russian to be a state language.
- Non-Russified Belarusians, represented by the national democrats, stress the distinctiveness of Belarusian identity. They want Belarusian as the sole state language.

Potential for tension between Belarusians and Poles

There may be some potential for tension between Belarusians and Poles, as well as between Orthodox and Catholic Belarusians. Lukashenko has accused Catholic priests in areas near the Belarus-Poland border of inculcating loyalty to Poland instead of Belarus.

Religion Law

There is also potential for tension between the state-backed Russian Orthodox Church and the developing Protestant communities. Belarus adopted a law in July 2002 banning organized prayer by religious communities of less than 20 people. It also prohibited religions that have been in Belarus for less than 20 years from publishing materials or setting up missions.

Foreign Relations in Belarus

Close security alliance with Russia

Under Lukashenko, Belarus has entered into a close security alliance with Russia. It is integrated into Russia's military system. Russia has troops on the Belarus-Poland border and long-term leases on air defense and other strategic facilities in Belarus, including the early warning radar at Baranovichi in the southwest.

Economic and political integration with Russia

Belarus under Lukashenko has also sought economic and political integration with Russia. This is mainly because its industry is deeply dependent on Russia for fuel and other supplies, and also—being non-competitive on Western markets—for export outlets. A role is also played by nostalgia for the Soviet Union and the idea of Slavic brotherhood: Lukashenko advocates a Slavic Union of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine.

Relations between Belarus and the West

Meanwhile, relations between Belarus and the West have deteriorated in response to human rights violations and the stalling of economic reform. Belarus has been excluded from European organizations, and is no longer eligible for foreign loans. In 1992, a ban was imposed on the travel of Belarus officials to countries of the European Union.

Russia-Belarus Union Treaty

In April 1996, Presidents Yeltsin and Lukashenko signed a Russia-Belarus Union Treaty that created a confederation of the two countries called the Union of Sovereign Republics. Joint

Union Treaty governmental, parliamentary, and judicial institutions have been set up, and treaties provide for policy coordination in customs, taxation, defense, and other fields.

Progress toward union has stalled Since Putin became Russian president the slow progress toward union has stalled. Putin has expressed irritation at Lukashenko's demands and opposes confederal arrangements that give Belarus veto powers. He proposed instead direct incorporation of Belarus' six provinces into the Russian Federation--an idea that Lukashenko finds unacceptable.

Conflicts of interest between the two governments are increasingly salient. The economic systems of Russia and Belarus are no longer compatible. Russia chafes at the economic burden of supporting Belarus, as shown in disputes over the supply of subsidized Russian gas to Belarus. Belarus has deferred plans to privatize certain enterprises in order to halt further Russian penetration of its economy. (Russian corporations such as the gas and oil giants Gazprom and Lukoil had been acquiring Belarusian enterprises.) In October 2002 the Russian politician Boris Nemtsov was detained and expelled from Belarus for "interfering" in the country's affairs.

Thus while politicians in both countries continue to pay lip service to the idea of union, feelings on both sides are very mixed and there is no shared understanding concerning the form that union should take.

CIS Belarus is also a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as are all the other post-Soviet states except the Baltic states. The CIS has functioned mainly as a consultative forum and an optional framework for cooperation in various fields.

Member of Eurasian Economic Community Belarus is also a member of the Eurasian Economic Community that was created in October 2000. The other members are Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Belarus increasingly isolated Belarus finds itself more and more isolated both politically and economically. Several foreign companies (for example, the Swedish furniture producer IKEA) have canceled planned investment projects in Belarus. Moreover, relations are now difficult not only with the West but also with Russia. It is doubtful whether attempts by Belarus to break out of isolation can make much headway until there is a change of regime in Minsk.

OSCE An OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group was established in Belarus in 1997, primarily to assist in promoting democratic institutions. The relationship between the OSCE and the Lukashenko regime became increasingly strained and tense. The regime refused to grant or extend visas to OSCE staff to show its displeasure with the mission's operations and force a change. By the end of October 2002, the mission no longer had any international staff. Subsequently, the OSCE and Government of Belarus negotiated an agreement to establish a new OSCE Office in Minsk with a new mandate as of January 1, 2003, replacing the OSCE

Mini-Quiz

Belarus' relationship with OSCE has

- improved under Lukashenko's presidency
- always been marked by full cooperation
- focused on economic policy issues
- deteriorated as Belarus has retreated from democratic practices

Ukraine

Ukraine at a glance



Area	235,000 square miles	
Capital	Kyiv	
Climate, terrain, and natural resources	<p>Climate Winters vary from cool along the Black Sea to cold farther inland; summers are warm across the greater part of the country, hot in the south.</p> <p>Terrain Except for mountains in the extreme west (the Carpathians) and in southern Crimea, the terrain tends to be hilly and wooded in the north of Ukraine, and flat grassland (steppe) further south. Many rivers flow south into the Black Sea, which is badly polluted. Apart from the marshlands in the northwest along the border with Belarus, rich black soil and a mild climate with adequate rainfall provide excellent conditions for agriculture.</p> <p>Natural Resources Ukraine, especially eastern Ukraine, is rich in coal, iron ore and other metals, salts and other minerals. There are unexploited reserves of oil and natural gas.</p>	
Population	In 2001: · About 48 Million.	<i>The population is in decline, with deaths exceeding births. It has fallen by 3.5 million in the last 11 years.</i>
Ethnic composition of the population	In 2001: Ukrainian 78% Russian 17% Other 5%	<i>Many people, especially in eastern Ukraine, are of mixed Russian and Ukrainian origin. The balance between Ukrainians and Russians varies widely from one part of Ukraine to another.</i>
Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ukrainian · Russian · Surzhyk <p>Ukrainian belongs to the East Slavic group of the Indo-European family of languages and is written in a variant of the Cyrillic script.</p>	<i>The state language of Ukraine is Ukrainian, but many people speak Russian or are bilingual in Russian and Ukrainian. In eastern Ukraine many people speak a mixture of Russian and Ukrainian known as Surzhyk.</i>
System of government	Ukraine is a republic of mixed presidential-parliamentary type, including a stable multi-party system.	
President	The first post-independence president of Ukraine was Leonid Kravchuk. The current president is Leonid Kuchma.	
Currency	Ukraine's currency is the Hryvna.	
Standard of living	GDP per capita in Ukraine in 2000 was \$650, below 2 per cent of the U.S. level. The standard of living has fallen sharply in Ukraine since independence, although there have been some encouraging signs of an economic upturn.	

Regions in Ukraine

Location

Ukraine borders:

- Russia to the northeast, east, and southeast
- The Black Sea to the south, with Turkey on the opposite shore
- Moldova and Romania to the southwest
- Hungary and Slovakia (previously Czechoslovakia) to the west
- Poland to the northwest

- Belarus to the north
-

The Dnieper

Ukraine's greatest river, the Dnieper, starts in the marshlands of eastern Belarus, flows south through Kyiv, then southeast to Dnipropetrovsk, and finally southwest into the Black Sea.

The Dnieper divides Ukraine in two.

- Ukraine east of the Dnieper is called "Left Bank Ukraine," and
 - Ukraine west of the Dnieper "Right Bank Ukraine" (that is, left or right as you face south, toward the Black Sea).
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Five Regions

Usually Ukraine is thought of as consisting of five regions:

- Eastern Ukraine
 - Southern Ukraine
 - Crimea
 - Central Ukraine
 - Western Ukraine
-

Eastern Ukraine

Eastern Ukraine is the center of the country's heavy industry (metallurgy, petrochemicals, and engineering). In the southeast there is an old coal-mining area called the Donbass. The main city of the Donbass is Donetsk. To the northeast lies Kharkiv, which was Ukraine's capital in the early Soviet period.

Eastern Ukraine is ethnically mixed (60 per cent Ukrainian, 40 per cent Russian) but mainly Russian-speaking. It has close links with neighboring areas of southern Russia.

Southern Ukraine

Southern Ukraine, along the Black Sea coast, is less heavily industrialized. There are a number of ports with shipbuilding, the most famous being the cosmopolitan city of Odessa.

The ethnic composition of Southern Ukraine is similar to that of Eastern Ukraine. It is also mainly Russian-speaking.

Crimea

Attached by a narrow isthmus to Southern Ukraine is the beautiful peninsula of Crimea, which has the status of an autonomous republic within Ukraine (capital Simferopol). Here are famous seaside resorts such as Yalta. Here also is the Black Sea Fleet, with its main base at Sevastopol. About two-thirds of the population of Crimea is Russian. Besides Russians and Ukrainians, there are the Crimean Tatars, who are indigenous to Crimea.

Central Ukraine

Central Ukraine comprises the country's rural heartland and the area around the capital. The population is mainly Ukrainian. Both the Ukrainian and the Russian languages are in wide use.

Western Ukraine Western Ukraine is mainly rural, and overwhelmingly Ukrainian and Ukrainian speaking. There is a Polish as well as a Russian minority. Western Ukraine, and especially the province of Galicia, with its main city of Lviv, is the stronghold of Ukrainian nationalism.

Western Ukraine includes the province of Transcarpathia. This province is not as "Ukrainian" as the rest of Western Ukraine. Many people there feel that they belong to a separate Slavic group called Rusyns or Ruthenes, although officially they are regarded simply as Ukrainians. There is also a sizeable Hungarian minority in the province.

Historical Background of Ukraine

Emergence from East Slavic tribes The Ukrainians, like the Russians and Belarusians, are descendant of the East Slavic tribes. The first great state associated with these East Slavic tribes was the Kyiv-based principality of Rus, which lasted from the late 9th century to 1240, when the Mongols captured Kyiv. Both Russian and Ukrainian nationalists now claim Kyivan Rus as the oldest part of their national heritage, although there were no such people as "Russians" or "Ukrainians" at that time.

The word "Ukraine" The word "Ukraine" came into use to denote the area roughly corresponding to present-day Ukraine in the late 16th century, when this area fell under the rule of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Ukraina had the literal meaning of borderland, for that was how Russians, Poles, and Turks all perceived the area.

1648 - 1775 In 1648 Cossacks led by Bogdan Khmelnytsky set off a peasant uprising, which was accompanied by massacres of Poles and Jews. In 1649 Khmelnytsky entered Kyiv and proclaimed a new state. This state, the Hetmanate, may reasonably be regarded as the first independent Ukrainian state.

But a series of Cossack defeats by the Polish army forced Khmelnytsky to turn to Moscow for protection. In 1654 the Treaty of Pereyaslav united Ukraine with Russia. The Ukrainians interpreted the treaty as guaranteeing autonomy for Ukraine within the Russian Empire, but the Czars did not share this interpretation. Ukraine's autonomy was whittled away and finally abolished in 1775, when serfdom was imposed on Ukraine.

Refusal to recognize Ukraine as a nation The Russian government refused to recognize the Ukrainians as a nation distinct from the Russians, or Ukrainian as a language distinct from Russian. Russians were called Great Russians, Ukrainians Little Russians, and Belarusians White Russians.

Mid-19th century The mid-19th century witnessed a revival of Ukrainian culture and ethnic consciousness. The key figure in this revival was Taras Shevchenko, who came to be regarded as Ukraine's national poet. The Czarist government responded in 1863 by banning the publication of books in the Ukrainian language. Shevchenko was exiled to Kazakhstan, where he was forbidden to write or draw.

At the same time, there was no discrimination against Ukrainians who did not insist on a separate identity. This continued to be true throughout the Soviet period.

Central and Eastern Ukraine

In November 1917, following the Russian Revolution, an independent Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed in Kyiv. Although the Ukrainian People's Republic was to be a lasting source of inspiration to Ukrainian nationalists, it survived for only three months. A rival Soviet Ukrainian government was formed in Kharkiv, and in February 1918 the Red Army captured Kyiv. But then, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Soviet Russia and Germany, Ukraine came under German occupation. A German puppet regime was established. The defeat of Germany by the Western allies in 1918 led to the Soviet recapture of Kyiv in February 1919 and the creation of the Ukrainian SSR.

During the 1920s the Soviet regime allowed Ukraine a measure of autonomy under the control of Ukrainian communists, who promoted the Ukrainian language and culture. In the 1930s Stalin reversed this policy. Many Ukrainian communists perished in the purges, and millions of peasants starved in the man-made famine of 1933, the result of forced collectivization and excessive grain requisitions.

Western Ukraine

It was not, however, the whole of Ukraine that suffered these experiences, but only central and eastern Ukraine. Western Ukraine escaped Russian and Soviet rule until 1939. Up to 1914 it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while between the wars most of it belonged to Poland (except for Transcarpathia, which belonged to Czechoslovakia, and another small area that belonged to Romania). This is why, even today, West Ukrainians are oriented more toward Central Europe than toward Russia.

In 1939, when Poland was dismembered following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, its west Ukrainian territories were absorbed by the Soviet Union. The USSR annexed the rest of western Ukraine in 1940 (from Romania) and 1946 (from Czechoslovakia). It took the Soviet authorities several years to suppress guerrilla resistance mounted in the newly Sovietized territories by the nationalists of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

Postwar changes

In the postwar period Ukraine underwent extensive industrialization. After Stalin's death, greater scope was again allowed to Ukrainian culture, but the policy of Russification resumed in the 1970s under a new communist party boss.

Mass demonstrations against Soviet rule

Gorbachev's perestroika at first had little effect on Ukraine. Mass demonstrations against Soviet rule began only in 1988. In September 1989, the opposition moderate nationalists ("national democrats") of Rukh held their first congress. In the same month, the hard-line Communist Party boss was removed. Leonid Kravchuk, who was willing to make concessions to the Ukrainian nationalists and forge an alliance with Rukh, replaced him as party leader. It was at this time that Ukrainian was declared the sole official language.

Full independence December 1, 1991

After the collapse of the attempted hard-line coup in Moscow in August 1991, Ukraine moved to claim full independence, confirmed by referendum on December 1, 1991, with 90 per cent voting in favor. On the same day, Kravchuk was elected the first president of independent Ukraine. He played the decisive role in the decision, made later that month by the heads of state of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, to abolish the Soviet Union. Everyone accepted that

"there can be no union without Ukraine"—and Ukraine did not want a union.

Domestic Politics in Ukraine

East-West Regional Division

The initially overwhelming public support for independence obscured a deep division in attitudes. Only in western Ukraine was independence valued for its own sake, as an ideal for which it was worth making sacrifices.

In Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine and Crimea, most of those who voted for independence did so under the illusion that it would quickly bring prosperity. When it turned out that independence was instead bringing them further impoverishment, they became increasingly hostile to the Ukrainian nationalists and the government in Kyiv. Their hostility was exacerbated by exaggerated fears that they would be forced to stop using Russian and use only Ukrainian.

This regional split forces any government that wants to hold the country together to pursue pragmatic policies tolerable to all regions in the sphere of language and culture. Ukrainian remains the sole state language but Russian-speaking regions have not been put under strong pressure to switch to Ukrainian, although proposals to turn Ukraine into a federation have not been adopted.

Leonid Kuchma elected president

In July 1994 Leonid Kuchma was elected president. Ukraine's democracy thereby passed the test of the peaceful transfer of power. Kuchma, an industrial manager from eastern Ukraine, was widely expected to tilt the balance away from nationalist western Ukraine. Indeed, he himself spoke very poor Ukrainian when he took office. But he introduced only marginal changes—and took lessons to improve his Ukrainian!

Other political divisions

While the east-west regional division remains important in Ukrainian politics, it has become rather less salient relative to other factors, such as the conventional opposition between parties and the rivalry between Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk, the two big industrial centers of eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian politics is very complicated, with no fewer than 122 registered political parties. Moreover, many politicians—a fifth of the deputies elected to parliament in 2002—belong to no party.

Types of Political Parties

Parties in Ukraine can be divided into the following types:

- Parties with roots going back to the Soviet period. The largest is the Communist Party of Ukraine, with a quarter of parliamentary deputies. Others are the Socialist Party of Ukraine, the Peasants' Party of Ukraine, and the Agrarian Party of Ukraine.
- A new radical-left party founded by Natalya Vitrenko, the Progressive Socialist Party.
- Moderate left-center parties, of which the largest is the United Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine.
- Centrist parties: the Party of the Regions, the People's Democratic Party of Ukraine, All-Ukrainian Association Hromada.
- The environmentalist Green Party of Ukraine.
- Parties formed around prominent personalities. Currently the main party of this type is the Party of the Motherland of former energy minister Julia Timoshenko.
- Moderate nationalist ("national-democratic") parties. The three Rukh parties are still the main parties in this category.

"Our Ukraine" Bloc wins most seats in 2002

The March 2002 parliamentary elections were the third held since independence in 1991.

The "Our Ukraine" bloc, including two of the three Rukh parties, took 160 seats. The "For a United Ukraine" bloc, consisting of five parties that supported President Kuchma, came in second with 101 seats. The Communist Party came in third with 66 seats.

The OSCE noted progress in comparison with the 1998 elections, although it also noted extreme bias in the state media and other abuses of authority. Other observers reported instances of vote-rigging, physical intimidation, and violence.

Coalition government formed

In November 2002, the new parliament endorsed the formation of a new coalition government with Donetsk region governor Viktor Yanukovich as prime minister. While the government includes representatives of several factions, the Donetsk clan is the dominant force.

Challenges

Despite its abundance of parties, Ukraine's democracy faces serious challenges:

- President and parliament do not work together effectively.
 - Corruption is rampant. Former Prime Minister Lazarenko is currently in a California prison charged with money laundering, wire fraud, and embezzling \$114 million while in office.
 - Scores of opposition politicians and journalists have disappeared or died under suspicious circumstances. Lately there have been widespread protests over the fate of journalist Georgy Gongadze, who disappeared in September 2000. President Kuchma is accused of ordering his assassination.
 - Involvement of organized crime in Ukrainian politics.
 - Regional divisions remain acute.
-

Trafficking in human beings

The OSCE Project Coordinator, together with international support, actively assists Ukrainian authorities, law enforcement and civil society in combating the trafficking in human beings, mainly for the purpose of forced prostitution. The Project Coordinator provides technical assistance, including workshops on anti-trafficking legislation, enforcement and hotlines in major cities.

Foreign Relations in Ukraine

Nationalized military forces

Unlike the Baltic states, which sought to expel Soviet military forces, and unlike Belarus, which accepted their continued presence under Russian control, Ukraine "nationalized"--that is, took control of almost all military forces that were on its territory when the Soviet Union was abolished. However, nuclear weapons were given up under Russian and Western pressure. Officers were given the choice of swearing an oath of loyalty to Ukraine or leaving the country.

Conflict over Soviet Black Sea Fleet

A conflict also broke out between Russia and Ukraine over possession of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet, which was based in Crimea. In 1997, after several years of negotiation, agreement was reached on how to divide the fleet. Ukraine ended up with only a small proportion of the ships, but kept the shore facilities (though agreeing to lease some of them back to Russia).

Ukraine's ambiguous geopolitical position

Ukraine has steered a cautious middle course between Russia and the West. One reason is Ukraine's ambiguous geopolitical position. While Ukraine has had some Western support, its aspirations to join the EU and NATO cannot be realized in the next decade or two. Ukraine's relations with the West have been strained by such issues as the fate of the Chernobyl nuclear power station and the absence of radical economic reform, and more recently by Ukraine's failure to act effectively against economic crime, its sales of radar equipment to Iraq, and the Gongadze affair. Meanwhile the Ukrainian economy, including the arms industry and the energy supply, depends heavily on close ties with Russia.

Divergent wishes of eastern and western Ukraine

Another reason is the need, as in domestic policy, to take account of the divergent wishes of eastern and western Ukraine. Eastern Ukraine wants closer ties with Russia and more effective cooperation within the CIS, while western Ukraine wants Ukraine to keep its distance from Russia and leave the CIS altogether.

By way of compromise, Ukraine has remained a member of the CIS but blocked its development into an effective supranational union. Ukraine cooperates with other post-Soviet states, but only on conditions that preserve its full sovereignty. For example, Ukraine rejects Russia's view that CIS member-states are collectively responsible for defending the "external borders of the CIS." Nevertheless, relations between Ukraine and Russia have become much closer in the last two or three years.

Ethnic Relations in Ukraine

Relations between Ukrainians and Russians as ethnic communities

Although the relative status of the Ukrainian and Russian languages has been a sensitive issue, relations between Ukrainians and Russians as ethnic communities in Ukraine have not been tense in most places. One exception is Crimea (see below). Another is Lviv in western Ukraine, where the local Russian community is treated with greater intolerance than central and eastern Ukraine.

Inclusive concept of state based on common citizenship rather than ethnicity

The lack of tension is due in large measure to the cautious approach of the government regarding the "Ukrainianization" of the Russian-speaking regions. Despite the influence of Ukrainian nationalism in the early years of independence, an inclusive concept of the state has prevailed, based on common citizenship rather than ethnicity.

Ethnic polarization between Russians and Ukrainians is also impeded by the presence of a large intermediate group of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and others of mixed Russian-Ukrainian identity. Even geography has helped in avoiding conflict. Between nationalist western Ukraine and anti-nationalist eastern Ukraine stretches the broad expanse of central Ukraine.

Little conflict between ethnic groups

There has also been little conflict between the two main ethnic groups and the various small ethnic minorities—again with the exception of Crimea. In 1992 the governments of Ukraine and Hungary negotiated an agreement to guarantee the rights of the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia. The issue of whether the Rusyns in Transcarpathia should be recognized as an ethnic group distinct from Ukrainians is potentially a source of tension.

Inter-Confessional Relations in Ukraine

Religious Conflict

While there has been little ethnic conflict in Ukraine in the 1990s, there has been religious conflict between four Christian Churches. These are:

- The Russian Orthodox Church controlled by the Patriarch in Moscow
- The breakaway Ukrainian Orthodox Church, loyal to the government of independent Ukraine
- The rival Ukrainian Orthodox Church established by Ukrainian émigrés in North America after World War Two
- The Uniate Church, a local variety of Catholicism that recognizes the authority of the Pope but retains some Orthodox rites.

Parishioners of these different confessions have struggled with each other for possession of church buildings.

Crimean Problems

To 18th Century

Crimea has a special history. Until the late 18th century it belonged to a Turkic people, the Crimean Tatars, whose khans were allied with Ottoman Turkey. The Khanate was conquered by Russia in 1776, and annexed to the Russian Empire by Empress Catherine II in 1783. Many Russian colonists settled in Crimea, while many Crimean Tatars emigrated.

1921-1954

In 1921 the Soviet leadership made Crimea an autonomous republic (ASSR) within Russia (the RSFSR). However, the cultural autonomy of the Crimean Tatars was suppressed under Stalin.

In 1944 the whole Crimean Tatar people was deported to Central Asia on suspicion of disloyalty. Many died on the way. In 1945 Crimea was made an ordinary province of Russia.

Then in 1954, after Stalin's death, Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine, on the grounds that its economy was more closely connected to Ukraine.

Crimean Tatars return to

For many years the Crimean Tatars campaigned for the right to return to their homeland. But it was only in the late 1980s, under Gorbachev, that they were finally allowed to return. Others had long since occupied the land and houses where they used to live so they

homeland established makeshift settlements.

Political representation and status of their language The arrival of the Crimean Tatars caused alarm among the Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian) population of Crimea, who fear that they will be dispossessed in turn. Beside the question of land, there are other contentious issues, such as the political representation of the Crimean Tatars and the status of their language. There have been many clashes set off by police attempting to remove Crimean Tatar settlements, and also by criminals killing Crimean Tatar traders for refusing to pay protection money.

Tensions between Simferopol and Kyiv The other aspect of the Crimean problem concerns relations between the regional authorities in Crimea's capital Simferopol and the central government in Kyiv.

In the early 1990s Crimea had a special autonomous status within Ukraine. Crimea is the only region of Ukraine where Russians form a large majority—about two-thirds of the population. Many Russians think that the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 was unjustified, and would like to see Crimea either:

- Again part of Russia or
- A separate republic with close ties to both Russia and Ukraine.

Neither of these options is acceptable to the majority of Ukrainians.

Tension between Simferopol and Kyiv reached its height following the election in 1994 of the secessionist Yuri Meshkov as Crimea's president. However, Meshkov did not take decisive steps to secede from Ukraine. This was partly the result of conflict between Meshkov and other local pro-Russian politicians, but the crucial factor was probably the unwillingness of the Russian government to give Meshkov the backing he needed.

Ukrainian parliament reasserts Kyiv's control In March 1995 the Ukrainian parliament reasserted Kyiv's control over Crimea, annulling the constitution that Crimea had adopted in 1992 and abolishing the Crimean presidency. By overreaching themselves, the Crimean authorities lost most of the prerogatives that they previously enjoyed.

In 1995-96, the Ukrainian and Crimean governments and parliaments succeeded in negotiating a mutually acceptable solution. A new constitution adopted by the Crimean parliament in November 1995 was amended to bring it into accordance with the Ukrainian constitution, and in June 1996 the Ukrainian parliament reaffirmed Crimea's status as an autonomous republic within Ukraine.

Role of OSCE The OSCE, which hosted a conference on Crimea in Locarno (Switzerland) in June 1995, played an important mediating and advisory role in resolving the dispute. Conflict prevention with regard to Crimea was the main mandate of the OSCE mission to Ukraine, which monitored the situation in the country from 1994 to 1999. In 1999, with the improvement of inter-ethnic relations, the OSCE and Ukraine agreed to close the OSCE mission to Ukraine and established "the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine" to develop programs in support of democratization.

Recent projects include:

- A review of legislation to bring it into line with international human rights standards

- Support to the office of the Ombudsman
- Assistance to the judiciary
- Media freedom
- Military reform

[OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine](#)

Crimean Tatars status remains unresolved

The problems involved with reintegration of Crimean Tatars in Crimea remains unresolved. The new constitutional arrangements are a step backward in this respect, as the Crimean Tatars have lost the representation that they were previously guaranteed in the Crimean parliament.

Ukraine Culture

Kyiv

Kyiv, the capital city of 2.6 million, stands astride Ukraine's greatest river, the broad and majestic Dnieper. The modern center and the surviving parts of the old city are on the hilly west bank of the river. The main street, called the Khreshchatik, runs between two steep hills. Here are the big hotels, department stores, and government buildings.

Opposite the metro station is an open square with fountains where people gather to rest and talk. On the street corners you can buy hot snacks, books, and other things at outdoor stalls. A short trolley ride will take you up to the ancient Monastery of the Caves (Percherska Lavra). A slightly longer bus trip will take you to Old Woman's Ravine (Baby Yar) and the haunting memorial to the Jewish victims of the Nazis who perished there.

Old Kyiv

A little to the west of the Khreshchatik you come to Old Kiev. Great damage was done to its architecture and art treasures under Stalin and during the Second World War, but much of the old city has now been restored. The recently reconstructed Golden Gate marks where the city's fortified wall once stood, while the Cathedral of St. Sophia has mosaics and frescoes dating back to the 11th century.

Dnieper river

Approaching the river, the slopes are covered by woods and parkland. Above them looms the giant statue of a sword-bearing woman who represents the Soviet Motherland defying the invader. Crossing the bridge to the flat east bank of the Dnieper, you reach the newer sections of the capital, dominated by big clusters of apartment blocks and industrial zones.

Other cities

Ukraine has several other big cities besides Kyiv. In the east of the country are the old and decaying centers of heavy industry and coal and iron ore mining as well as the republic's former capital Kharkiv. In the south, on the Black Sea coast, lies the famous cosmopolitan port city of Odessa, while the historic center of western Ukraine is the city of Lviv.

Geography

Over a third of the country's people live in the countryside, mostly in large villages of 1,000 to 5,000 inhabitants. Dnieper is the longest river in Ukraine, with a length of 2,200 kilometers (1,367 miles). It flows from the north to the south, emptying into the Black Sea. The Dnieper is the longest river in Ukraine, with a length of 2,200 kilometers (1,367 miles). It flows from the north to the south, emptying into the Black Sea.

5,000 inhabitants. Rich black soil and a mild climate with adequate rainfall provide excellent conditions for agriculture, compensating to some extent for the effects of communism and economic stagnation.

The south is open and flat, watered by many streams that empty into the badly polluted Black Sea. Further north the terrain becomes hilly and wooded, except for marshlands in the northwest. In the far west of Ukraine the land rises to the wooded heights of the Carpathian Mountains.

Crimea

The beautiful Crimean peninsula, in the south, juts out into the Black Sea. Crimea is known for its health spas and ancient ruins, for its wines and garlic -- and for the world's longest trolley bus route (from the capital of Simferopol to the resort of Yalta). Rocky mountains provide the backdrop for the palm-lined beaches that used to serve as the Soviet Union's playground.

Cuisine

Ukrainian cooking is famous for its dumplings. Varenyky are dough pockets filled with potato, cheese, blueberries, cherries or prunes, often served with onions and sour cream, while yushka are boiled dumplings filled with chopped mushroom and onion. There are various kinds of sausage, like the smoked ham kovbasa and kyshka, which is made from buckwheat and blood. Other popular dishes are borshch (beet soup), nalysnyky (crepes), and holubtsi -- baked cabbage-leaf rolls made in the shape of doves, stuffed with rice and covered with tomato sauce. Two specialties traditionally served on Christmas Eve are "God's food" or kutia, a cold dish of boiled wheat mixed with poppy seeds and honey, and "God's drink" or uzvar, a mixture of 12 different stewed fruits. Linked to the celebration of Christmas and Easter are many old customs going back to pagan times.

Mini-Quiz

The Project Coordinator in Ukraine deals with which of the following issues?

- trafficking in human beings
- reintegration of the Tartars in the Crimea
- review of legislation
- all of the above

Moldova

Moldova at a glance



Area	13,000 square miles
Location	Moldova borders on Ukraine to the north, east, and south, and on Romania to the west. Moldova has no coastline, although its southeastern corner is only 30 miles from the Black Sea coast near Odessa. It does have a very short frontage on the River Danube, and has asked Ukraine to give it the land needed to extend that frontage and build a port there.
Climate, terrain, and natural resources	<p>Terrain Moldova's terrain consists of rolling hills and valleys. Rivers flow southeast into the Black Sea: the River Prut along the border with Romania, the River Dniester near the border with Ukraine, and some smaller rivers in between. The narrow strip of land between the Dniester and the Ukrainian border, less than 1,600 square miles in area, is known as Left-Bank Moldova or the Transdniester region, and the rest of the country as Right-Bank Moldova (that is, left or right as you face east toward the sea).</p> <p>Climate As in Ukraine, rich soil and a mild climate provide excellent conditions for agriculture.</p> <p>Resources</p>

	Moldova is best known for its grapes and wines. There is some brown coal (lignite) and minerals.	
Capital and largest cities	Chisinau	<i>The second largest city is Tiraspol, the main industrial center of the Transdnister region.</i>
Population	4.5 million	
Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Moldovan · Russian 	<i>Moldovan is virtually identical to Romanian, which belongs to the Romance group of the Indo-European family. Moldovan was written in the Cyrillic script to emphasize the supposed difference during the Soviet period. The Latin script is now again in use (except in the Transdnister region).</i>
Ethnic composition of the population	Moldovans 65% Ukrainians 14 % Russians 13 % Gagauz 3.5 % Other 4.5 %	<i>The Gagauz live mainly in the area around Comrat, profess Orthodox Christianity, and speak a form of classical Ottoman Turkish.</i>
Language and Ethnicity	<p>Moldovan and Romanian are basically the same language, yet Moldovans are considered an ethnic group distinct from Romanians. Moldovans are themselves divided on this matter. Some regard Moldovans as Romanians, and aspire to unite Moldova and Romania into a single state. Others view Moldovans and Romanians as groups with distinct though closely related identities, and prefer to preserve Moldova as a state separate from Romania.</p> <p>As most Ukrainians, as well as some Moldovans and other non-Russians, are Russian-speaking, Russian-speakers as a cultural group constitute at least 30 per cent of the population. Russian-speakers form the majority in the Transdnister region, though many also live in the capital Chisinau and other places.</p>	
System of government	Since July 2000, Moldova has been a purely parliamentary democracy. There is a president, but he is elected by the parliament.	
President	The first president of independent Moldova was Mircea Snegur. In 1996 Petru Lucinski replaced Snegur. Since March 2001 the president has been Vladimir Voronov.	
Currency	The currency of Moldova is the Leu.	
Standard of living	<p>GDP per capita in Moldova in 2002 was about \$400, the lowest in Europe and barely 1 per cent of the U.S. level.</p> <p>Eighty percent of the population live on less than a dollar a day.</p>	

Historical Background of Moldova

Introduction

The present-day Republic of Moldova occupies the same territory as the Soviet republic that it replaced, the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. To understand the historical background of this territory, we must make a clear distinction between:

- Right-Bank Moldova, between the Rivers Prut and Dniester, an area that corresponds to the greater part of what was known in the 19th and early 20th centuries as Bessarabia, and
- Left-Bank Moldova, also known as the Transdnister region.

Bessarabia in the 15th Century through 1918

In the Late Middle Ages, Bessarabia was part of the principality of Moldova. During the second half of the 15th century, the principality fought off attacks from Ottoman Turkey under the leadership of Prince Stephen the Great, who is now regarded as the father of the Moldovan nation. However, when Stephen died in 1504, Moldova became a Turkish dependency. In the 18th century it came increasingly under Russian influence. In 1812

Bessarabia was incorporated into the Russian Empire. Then in 1918, during the Russian Civil War, it was incorporated in Romania, where it remained until 1940.

Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR)

Before the Soviet period, the Transdnister region had always been regarded as part of Ukraine, not of Moldova or Bessarabia. Only in 1924 was it artificially given a Moldovan identity as part of a new Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) within the Ukrainian SSR. This formation was created to facilitate the eventual re-absorption of Bessarabia into the Soviet Union—a goal finally achieved in 1940 as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

1941

In 1941 Romania joined its ally, Nazi Germany, in attacking the USSR, and occupied Bessarabia together with a broad swathe of Ukrainian land further to the east. In 1944 the Soviet army re-conquered Bessarabia. Only then were the two parts of present-day Moldova joined together to form the Moldavian SSR. At the same time, about one-third of Bessarabia, including its entire Black Sea coastline, was incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR.

However, the two parts of the Moldavian SSR remained different in important ways. The Transdnister region, having long been part of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union, remained more Russified and Sovietized than Right-Bank Moldavia. Indeed, the difference widened, because intensive postwar industrialization brought a big influx of Russian and Ukrainian workers into the Transdnister region.

Moldovan Popular Front (MPF)

Latent tensions came out into the open when Gorbachev started liberalizing the Soviet political system. In May 1989, the Moldovan Popular Front (MPF) was established in Right-Bank Moldova. The MPF served as an umbrella organization for Moldovans who sought Moldova's secession from the USSR and (in most cases) its unification with Romania. It was soon joined by two opposing movements:

- The Intermovement, representing pro-Soviet Russian-speakers, and
- Gagauz Khalky, representing the Gagauz minority.

Soon after, there began the long series of rallies, protests, and strikes that led to violent clashes and eventually civil war.

March 1990

In March 1990, the MPF gained control of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR in the first competitive elections to that body. Alarmed at the apparent prospect of finding themselves unwelcome minorities within a Greater Romania, the Gagauz and the Russian-speakers of Left-Bank Moldova reacted by proclaiming Gagauz and Transdnister autonomous republics (ASSRs) within Moldova (in November 1989 and January 1990 respectively). The MPF-dominated Supreme Soviet, however, refused to recognize these autonomous republics.

In June 1990, the Supreme Soviet declared the sovereignty of the Moldovan (no longer Moldavian) SSR, and appointed its chairman Mircea Snegur president. Although that did not yet mean full independence, such was evidently the goal. In September 1990, the Gagauz area and the Transdnister region proclaimed themselves Union Republics of the USSR (SSRs) outside Moldova.

In October 1990, a confrontation between crowds of MPF and Gagauz activists, many armed, ended without violence thanks to the intervention of Soviet troops and the negotiation of

mutual concessions. But in November 1990 the first violent clashes did occur between Transdnierster volunteers and Moldovan police in the city of Dubossary on the Dniester River.

Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova (the country's official name since May 1991) declared independence in the wake of the attempted hard-line coup in Moscow in August 1991. The Communist Party of Moldavia was banned. The Transdnierster region immediately responded by declaring independence in its turn as the Transdnierster Moldovan Republic, with Tiraspol as its capital.

The Gagauz Conflict

The Gagauz Area Although intermittent clashes did take place between Gagauz demonstrators and Moldovan police, the situation in the Gagauz area never escalated to large-scale violence. As a fairly small minority living in a poor and isolated agricultural area, the Gagauz—unlike the Transdniersters—were not perceived by Moldovans as a very significant threat to the country's independence and territorial integrity.

Establishing a recognized autonomous territory

Discussion of draft laws to create a recognized autonomous territory for the Gagauz began as early as October 1991, and in April 1993 a Gagauz congress decided that the Gagauz would remain within Moldova provided that they received the necessary guarantees. However, resolution of the conflict on this basis was blocked so long as the parliament remained dominated by the MPF. The blockage was removed in February 1994 by the election of a new and less nationalist parliament.

Special status of the Gagauz area

The new constitution adopted in July 1994 envisaged the granting of special status to the Gagauz area (as well as to the Transdnierster region). The basis for resolving the conflict was established in December 1994, when a law was passed codifying the autonomous status of Gagauzia. The OSCE mission to Moldova played an important supporting role in nurturing the negotiation process and monitoring implementation of the new arrangements.

Recent tensions

Since early 1992, relations have deteriorated between the Voronin government in Chisinau and local politicians, who fear that the autonomy of the Gagauz area may be in jeopardy.

The Transdnierster Conflict

Transdnierster region

The Transdnierster issue has proven much more difficult to resolve.

Fighting recurred in Dubossary in September 1991, and again on a larger scale in December 1991. In March 1992 it spread to Bendery, another ethnically mixed city on the Right Bank of the Dniester and to some rural areas. Combatants now included not only unorganized local

volunteers and Moldovan police, but also newly formed Moldovan internal security troops, soldiers of the new Moldovan National Army and Transdnier Guard, volunteers from Romania (with the Moldovans), and Cossack volunteers from Russia (with the Transdniersters). The Russian 14th Army, deployed on the Left Bank, remained officially neutral, but its members sympathized with the Transdniersters and provided them with the arms they needed. By June 1992 there were about 800 war dead and over 100,000 refugees.

On June 25 the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania met and agreed on a plan to enforce a ceasefire. The forces of the two sides were to be separated, a peacekeeping force interposed between them, and a Special Control Commission established in Bendery. These arrangements have been in place since August 1992. The peacekeepers are mainly Russian troops together with small Moldovan and Transdnierster contingents.

Negotiations and OSCE

Hostilities have not resumed, but neither have numerous rounds of negotiations between the sides made much progress toward a settlement. Negotiations have been conducted under the joint auspices of Russia and the OSCE, with a Ukrainian representative also present from 1996 onward. The OSCE mission has played an active role, keeping channels of communication open and attempting to mediate a lasting political settlement between the sides.

From an early stage Moldovan leaders have accepted that the Transdnierster region should be given a special autonomous status within Moldova, including the right to secede in the event that Moldova were to unite with Romania. A framework proposed in December 1993 by the OSCE mission for the future status of Transdnierstria was accepted by Moldova, and in April 1995 Moldovan negotiators presented a draft law based on the OSCE recommendations.

[The OSCE Mission to Moldova](#)

Negotiations between Moldova and Transdnierster leader

However, the concessions offered by successive Moldovan governments have never been enough to satisfy Transdnierster leader Igor Smirnov and his colleagues, who seem willing to contemplate only a loose association with Moldova. Agreement has been reached only on the non-use of force (July 1995), some confidence building measures, and certain practical matters. In June 2001, Smirnov and Voronov met and agreed to dismantle checkpoints, rebuild bridges across the Dniester, and cooperate in the economic field.

Russian Withdrawal

Moldova has consistently sought the withdrawal of all Russian forces together with their equipment. In 1994, Russia agreed, over Transdnierster objections, that this would be done within three years. At the OSCE summit in Istanbul in 1999, Russia promised to complete the withdrawal by the end of 2002. Obstruction by the Tiraspol authorities, however, precluded Russia from completing its withdrawal by the end of 2002 as promised. The deadline has now been extended to the end of 2003. Of the 20,000 troops in the 14th Army at the time of independence, fewer than 2,000 remain.

OSCE proposes Federation

In 2002, the OSCE Mission presented a proposal for a federation as a means to settle the Transdnierster conflict.

Several rounds of negotiations were held between the Moldovan government and

Transdniestrian authorities in the presence of mediators from the OSCE, Russia and Ukraine. Negotiations are continuing.

Old munitions, weapons, vehicles, and equipment

The main problem, however, is not the remaining troops but the enormous quantities of old munitions, weapons, vehicles, and equipment still stored in the Transdniester region. The Transdniester leaders have done all in their power to block the removal or decommissioning of the stores, which they aim to bring under their own control once Russian forces have completely withdrawn.

After many long delays, significant withdrawals of Russian arms began in 2002, with other munitions being destroyed in-country with international participation. The significant obstacle that these arms presented for the negotiations on Transdnistria is being reduced.

Is the Transdniester conflict an ethnic conflict?

Local observers have questioned whether the Transdniester conflict should be regarded as an ethnic conflict. They point out that many Moldovans support the Transdniester side, while many Russians support the Moldovan side. Indeed, 40 per cent of the Left Bank population is Moldovan, and the speaker of the Transdniester legislature is a Moldovan.

Moldovan, alongside Russian and Ukrainian, is an official language in Transdnistria, though state schools are required to teach it in the Cyrillic and not the Latin script.

While perhaps not ethnic in the narrowest sense, the conflict did initially pit groups with divergent linguistic and cultural orientations against each other: toward Romania on one side, toward Russia on the other. Now that Moldova has a central government that is oriented toward Russia not Romania, this contrast no longer exists. If the Transdniester leaders still want to preserve their enclave as an independent mini-state, it is presumably for the sake of power and the benefits, including criminal income, that go with it.

Ethnic Relations in Moldova

Improved Ethnic Relations

Although the conflict with Transdnistria has not been resolved, ethnic relations in Right-Bank Moldova have greatly improved in recent years. That Moldovans would elect an ethnic Russian as their president was hardly conceivable ten years ago. Moreover, Russian-speakers in the capital Chisinau have always been less hostile to Moldovan independence than their counterparts on the Left Bank.

Citizenship

Citizenship has never been a bone of contention in Moldova in the way that it has been in Estonia and Latvia. The citizenship law of June 1991 granted automatic citizenship both to those who resided in Moldova before 1940 (when it was part of Romania) and their descendants and to those who resided in Soviet Moldavia before 1990.

Language policy

Language policy has been the source of a certain amount of tension. In August 1989, Moldovan was declared the sole state language, and in March 1990 proficiency in Moldovan was made a condition of state employment (though this law did not come into full force until 1994). The newly elected communist government's decision in 2002 to make Russian

language classes compulsory in schools led to protest by the Christian-Democratic Popular Party (PCCD), the main opposition party. The language issue has intensified domestic political tensions in Moldova.

Domestic Politics in Moldova

Introduction

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, politics in Moldova were polarized between the Moldovan Popular Front on one side and communist and post-communist forces on the other. From about 1993 a realignment began to take shape.

Parliamentary Elections of February 1994

In May 1993, the moderate nationalists, who opposed union with Romania, were expelled from the Popular Front (renamed in February 1992 the Christian-Democratic Popular Front) and founded the Social-Democratic Party of Moldova. In the February 1994 parliamentary elections, the Popular Front lost most of its support, retaining a mere 7.5 per cent of the vote.

These elections were won by two post-communist parties—the former Communist Party, renamed the Socialist Party (22 per cent), and the Democratic Agrarian Party (43 per cent), whose deputies were mostly village mayors and collective farm managers. Neither the Democratic Labor Party, representing the managers of large industrial enterprises, nor the Reform Party, representing urban professionals supportive of private enterprise, overcame the 4 per cent threshold necessary for a party to enter parliament.

Presidential Elections of December 1996

In the presidential election of December 1996, Petru Lucinski, who had been First Secretary of the Communist Party of Moldavia from November 1989 to August 1991, ousted President Mircea Snegur.

Continued Independence of Moldova

The month following the election, a referendum was held in which over 90 per cent of voters approved the continued independence of Moldova and rejected unification with Romania, thereby laying the issue to rest. In July parliament ratified a new constitution.

Parliamentary Elections of March 1998

The post-communist parties lost their majority in the parliamentary elections of March 1998. Although the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova, with 30 per cent of the vote, did better than any other single party, a governing coalition of center-right parties (together representing 45 per cent of voters) was formed under the name "Alliance for Democracy and Reforms," led by former president Snegur.

Parliamentary Elections of February 2001

A new swing to the left was evident in the results of the parliamentary elections of February 2001. This time the Communist Party won over 50 per cent of the vote, on pledges to bring Moldova closer to Russia and restore living standards to Soviet-era standards. The communists control more than two-thirds of the parliament's seats, while the PCCD has only 11 seats. In March the new parliament chose Communist Party leader Vladimir Voronov as

president.

Elections largely free and fair

International observers have assessed Moldovan elections as largely free and fair. For most of the 1990s, Moldova has had a mixed parliamentary-presidential system, with the president elected by popular vote.

There were frequent impasses between president and parliament. In 1999 President Petru Lucinski attempted to establish a more effective presidential system of government, but voters rejected his proposals. As a result, parliament emerged in a stronger position than ever. In July 2000, parliament amended the constitution to enable it to elect the president.

Recent developments

In January 2002, the communist government responded to opposition demonstrations against compulsory Russian language classes in schools by suspending temporarily the activity of the Christian Democratic People's Party. Relations between the government and the opposition continue to be tense, and independent media (especially radio stations) have been harassed. Local elections in May 2003 showed that the Communist Party remains in a strong position.

Foreign Relations in Moldova

Economy dependent on the former Soviet Union

Moldova's economy remains highly dependent on the rest of the former Soviet Union, and on Russia in particular, above all for its fuel supply and for markets for its agricultural exports.

Romania has not proven viable as an alternative economic partner.

The breakdown of economic links with other post-Soviet republics had a severe impact on Moldova. The conflict with the Transdniester region, which lies astride the lines of communication connecting Moldova with Ukraine and Russia, made matters even worse, especially as nearly all of Moldova's electricity generating capacity is on the Left Bank.

These realities do much to explain why since 1994 Moldova has distanced itself from Romania and moved closer to Russia and the CIS in its foreign relations. Indeed, they do much to explain why Moldovan politicians willing to re-orient the country in this direction were able to come to power. It was only following the electoral victory of the Agrarian Democratic Party in February 1994 that the parliament was willing to ratify Moldova's membership in the CIS.

Eurasian Economic Community

President Voronov would like Moldova to join the Eurasian Economic Community, the customs union of the core CIS countries, though this will not yield its full potential benefit unless Ukraine joins as well. He looks forward to Moldova obtaining access to cheap Russian gas when the planned gas pipeline from Russia to Europe through Ukraine and Moldova is built, but this requires that the conflict with Trans-Dniestria finally be resolved.

Relations with the West

The Voronov government claims to seek good relations with both Russia and the West. Moldova has joined the World Trade Organization and aspires to enter the European Union

the West

However, the clampdown on the opposition in early 2002 was criticized by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, while a series of disputes with Western companies operating in Moldova has undermined relations with the World Bank and IMF. Relations with Romania are poor.

Mini-Quiz

The focus of the OSCE Mission in Moldova is:

- the Transdniestria conflict
- economic development
- Gagauz independence
- all of the above

Moldova Culture

Chisinau

The capital Chisinau (Russian name Kishinev) is home to about one-sixth of the country's inhabitants. It is built along the River Bik, a tributary of Moldova's main river, the Dniester. The Old City was built in the 15th century on seven hills west of the river. Its narrow crooked streets and intricate architecture contrast sharply with the broad and straight tree-lined boulevards of the 19th-century New City that surrounds it.

The central avenue is named after Moldova's founding prince Stefan the Great. There is a monument to him at the entrance to the park that also bears his name. Other sights are the Holy Gates, the three cathedrals, and several churches. The old water tower that is now the city museum is across the Bik River on the east bank, as are the circus and the railroad station. Chisinau is the main economic and cultural center of Moldova, but a large proportion of the country's industry is situated in the rather run-down city of Tiraspol, which stands on the River Dniester.

Countryside

The countryside is fairly flat, wooded in places and with some low hills. The mild climate and rich black soil are good for growing cereals, tobacco, fruit and vegetables, and especially grapes: Moldova is widely known for its wines.

Economy

The economy is in an abysmal condition. A majority lives under the poverty line and most people's wages don't cover their basic needs. They survive thanks to their garden plots. Many seek work abroad, often in Russia.

Folk traditions

An attempt is now underway to revive Moldovan folk traditions that were discouraged under Soviet rule. Many of these traditions are associated with Christmas and the New Year -- for example, celebrating Ignat (a holiday preceding Christmas), exchanging lichie (flat wheat cakes) between relatives on Christmas Eve, and wearing fairytale masks on New Year's Eve. In the countryside, after Christmas dinner, children carry small decorated wooden plows around the village to bring good harvests.

Cuisine

Moldovan cooking is almost the same as Romanian cooking, though it reflects a certain amount of Russian influence. A proper meal starts with a hearty soup of potatoes, vegetables, and meat, served in small pots with bread. The main course is likely to be meat with potatoes or mamaliga, which is a mixture of corn mush and salad in vinegar. Then roasted sunflower seeds may be nibbled. Plenty of wine, vodka, or palinka (Moldovan brandy) is drunk. Other dishes you may come across are chicken heads in jelly, salad made of beans and sausage, noodles with poppy seeds and cheese, and dumplings filled with cabbage or cheese.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You have completed Module 4: Eastern Europe

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