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Module 4. Eastern Europe

Developed by the
United States Institute of Peace
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Overview

Overview

Contents

This module focuses on the work of the OSCE in:

- Belarus
- Ukraine
- Moldova

Eastern Europe



★ Capital City
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Belarus

Overview

At a glance

This section describes basic geographic and demographic data.

Item	Description
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	Climate The climate of Belarus is humid and moderately continental. 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. 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.
Capital	The capital of Belarus is Minsk.
Population	9.7 million (2007 estimated)
Ethnic composition of the population	Many people in the southern area of Belarus have a mixed Belarusian-Ukrainian identity and dialect. They are called Poleshchuks. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Belarusians 81%• Russians 11%• Poles 4%• Ukrainians 2%

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Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Languages	<p>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.</p> <p>Although the official state language is Belarusian the language in most common use is Russian.</p>
System of government	<p>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.</p>
Head of state	<p>The current president is Alexander Lukashenko (reelected for a five-year term in 2006).</p>
Currency	<p>The currency of Belarus is the Belarusian Ruble.</p> <p>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.</p>
Standard of living	<p>Estimated per capita GDP (on a purchasing power parity basis) in 2007 was \$10,200.</p>

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Overview, Continued

Map The following graphic is a map of Belarus.



Historical background of Belarus

Belarus 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.

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 in the mid-nineteenth century. 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 was 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.

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Historical background of Belarus, Continued

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.

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Historical background of Belarus, Continued

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 radioactivity affected Belarus the most 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.

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Historical background of Belarus, Continued

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% of the vote, was a former collective farm chairman called Alexander Lukashenko, who had only recently started to gain popularity as a campaigner against corruption. Later he himself was accused of corruption.

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Domestic politics in Belarus, Continued

Lukashenko

Lukashenko moved quickly to consolidate his position. He filled the government with loyalists, brought the media under his control, and reintroduced press censorship.

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 jailing of opposition activists began. Paznyak and another BPF leader sought political asylum in the United States.

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Domestic politics in Belarus, Continued

Presidential powers

The extension of presidential powers culminated in November 1996, when yet another constitution was approved by referendum. Presidential powers were now virtually unlimited.

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Domestic politics in Belarus, Continued

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.

2001 Presidential election

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% of the vote. According to an independent count, Lukashenko had obtained only 46%. OSCE monitors found that the election failed to meet international standards.

2004 Parliamentary elections and referendum

Parliamentary elections held in October 2004 were said by OSCE to have fallen significantly short of OSCE commitments. The OSCE said the rights of association and expression were seriously challenged by the authorities, while the right to seek political office without discrimination, for candidates to present views, and voters to learn about and discuss them, were largely ignored.

A referendum held at the same time proposing the removal of the two-term limit on holding the presidency was reportedly approved by 77% of the voters, allowing President Lukashenko to continue to run and hold office. The referendum was scheduled to coincide with the parliamentary elections at the last minute, so the OSCE, although it was invited to observe it, only took note of its impact on the elections. Nonetheless, the OSCE noted the government's unrestrained bias in favor of the referendum campaign, and its unregulated intrusion into the polling stations, which contributed to a highly distorted campaign environment.

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Domestic politics in Belarus, Continued

Attack on opposition leaders

After the 2004 election, on October 19, riot police carried out violent attacks on Belarusian opposition leaders after a political demonstration in Minsk. An independent journalist was stabbed to death in her apartment days later.

In December, authorities sentenced opposition figure Mikhail Marynich, a former government minister and diplomat, to jail for 3 1/2 years on spurious charges (the sentence was later reduced by one year). At least five other opposition politicians were jailed or arrested. Local student activists, together with Russian, Ukrainian, and Georgian activists, were also detained.

Opposition Unites

Nearly 800 delegates from opposition parties and NGOs held a “Congress of Democratic Forces” to agree on a single candidate to oppose Lukashenko in the 2006 presidential elections. Civil society representative and former regional civil servant Alexander Milinkevich was selected over opposition party leader Anatoly Lebedko by 399 to 391 ballots.

2006 Presidential election

Lukashenko won 82.6% of the votes and reelection in the March 2006 presidential election, according to Belarus election officials. The OSCE reported that the election did not meet required international standards for free and fair elections, noting that arbitrary use of state power and widespread detentions showed a disregard for basic rights and raised doubts regarding the authorities willingness to tolerate political competition. In contrast, a CIS observer mission reported that despite some technical violations, the election had taken place within the requirements of Belarusian law.

Opposition themes

In July 2006 opposition leader Alyaksandr Kazulin was sentenced to five and a half years in prison for his role in organizing opposition rallies after the 2006 election. Other activists were sentenced to shorter terms.

Andrei Kim, another opposition activist considered a political prisoner in the West, was sentenced to 18 months in jail in April 2008 for allegedly attacking a policeman at a protest by small businessmen.

Milinkevich has worked with other opposition parties to highlight the goal of holding free and democratic elections in Belarus. His own party has also focused on countering government statements of economic success under Lukashenko.

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Domestic politics in Belarus, Continued

Demonstrations against Lukashenko

An estimated 10,000 protestors participated in one of the largest demonstrations against Lukashenko in the Belarus capital of Minsk on March 25, 2007. Milinkevich addressed the crowd.

A demonstration by 3,000 commemorating the 90th anniversary of the formation of the Belarusian National Republic in Minsk in March 2008 was violently broken up by militia (police). KGB raids on the homes of regime opponents and journalists followed.

The For Freedom Movement led by Milinkevich organized a Chernobyl Way” March in Minsk on August 28, mirroring earlier mass protest marches.

Impact of economic situation

The economic situation is very difficult. 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. In March 2004 the Belarus government decided to privatize loss-making collective farms.

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. However, the Russian subsidy has declined considerably in recent years, and is scheduled to end completely by 2011.

Ethnic relations in Belarus

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 to remain the sole state language.

Inter-ethnic relations

Inter-ethnic relations are not a serious problem in Belarus.

Most Belarusians do not see the main ethnic minority, the Russians, as culturally alien or a threat to national identity.

There is, however, governmental and societal discrimination against Belarus' Polish and Roma minorities. Authorities harass the Warsaw-sponsored Union of Poles in Belarus, including detention of its leadership.

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Ethnic relations in Belarus, Continued

Religious Tensions

There is potential for tension 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.

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.

Russia's interest in further integration with Belarus is questionable. During 2007 their relations deteriorated after increases in the price of Russian energy supplied to Belarus.

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Foreign relations in Belarus, Continued

Poor relations with the West

The regime's human rights violations have played a major role in the deterioration of Belarus' relations with the West. In March 2006, the U.S. issued a report entitled "the last dictatorship in Europe," (<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/prsr/63297.htm>) accusing Lukashenko's government of sales of arms and weapons-related technologies to countries of concern, including state sponsors of terrorism.

After the 2006 post-presidential election crackdown on demonstrators and the opposition, the EU and the U.S. applied targeted travel restrictions and financial sanctions against Lukashenko and other regime leaders. The travel ban was widened in 2007 to include directors and deputy directors of state-owned enterprises.

In November 2007, the U.S. imposed sanctions on the state oil company, Belneftekhim, which Washington charged was personally controlled by Lukashenko. The Treasury Department froze the company's U.S. assets and barred Americans from doing business with it. The U.S. subsequently allowed a broad interpretation of a list of firms linked to Belneftekhim. The U.S. and the EU continued to call for the release of political prisoners, including Kazulin.

In April 2008 Belarus withdrew its ambassador from Washington, and the U.S. ambassador in Minsk was asked to leave the country. In addition, the U.S. embassy was asked to reduce its staff by the Belarus government, and again asked to cut its staff down to five diplomats in May.

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

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Foreign relations in Belarus, Continued

Progress toward union has stalled

Nonetheless, when Putin became Russian president, the movement toward union stalled. Putin expressed irritation at Lukashenko's demands and opposed confederal arrangements that gave Belarus veto powers. He proposed instead direct incorporation of Belarus' six provinces into the Russian Federation--an idea that Lukashenko found unacceptable.

Conflicts of interest between the two governments are increasingly significant. 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.)

There was a plan for Belarus to adopt the Russian ruble as its currency at the beginning of 2005, but Lukashenko postponed transitional measures and called the plan premature. He expressed the fear that currency unification would undermine Belarus' sovereignty. The Belarusian side demanded that Russia and Belarus jointly control circulation of the ruble and that Russia pay Belarus \$2.1 billion as compensation for the costs of adopting the ruble. Neither demand was acceptable to Russia.

Belarus faced another Russian gas cutoff at the beginning of 2007, but agreed at the last moment to a five-year contract with Gazprom providing for a doubling of its subsidized price of gas, coupled with the Russian gas monopoly's purchase of 50% of the Beltransgaz Belarusian state-controlled gas pipeline network. Gas prices are to gradually increase until they match world market prices by 2011. Belarus' 2007 imposition of a tariff on crude oil flowing from Russia and passing through its territory to Western Europe resulted in a short-lived Russian cut-off of oil. Belarus quickly backed down and repealed the tariff.

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.

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Foreign relations in Belarus, Continued

**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, Tajikistan, and (since October 2005) Uzbekistan.

**Belarus
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.

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Foreign relations in Belarus, Continued

OSCE

An OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group was established in Belarus in 1997, primarily to assist in promoting democratic institutions. Increasingly, the relationship between the OSCE and the Lukashenko regime deteriorated. The regime refused to grant or extend visas to OSCE staff to show its irritation with the mission's operations. By the end of 2002, the mission no longer had any international staff. Subsequently, the OSCE and Belarus negotiated an agreement to establish a new OSCE Office in Minsk with a new mandate as of January 1, 2003. The [OSCE Office in Minsk's](#) current mandate is to assist the Belarusian government in promoting institution building, consolidating the rule of law and in developing relations with civil society; and assisting with its economic and environmental activities.

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

Overview

At a glance

The following table describes geographic and demographic information for Ukraine.

Item	Description
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	46.3 Million (2007 estimated)
Ethnic composition of the population	<p>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. The population is approximately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ukrainian 73%• Russian 22%• Other 5%

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Overview, Continued

At a glance (**continued**)

Item	Description
Languages	Ukrainian belongs to the East Slavic group of the Indo-European family of languages and is written in a variant of the Cyrillic script. The state language of Ukraine is Ukrainian, but many people speak Russian or are bilingual in Russian and Ukrainian. Many people speak a mixture of Russian and Ukrainian known as Surzhyk.
System of government	Ukraine is a republic of mixed presidential-parliamentary type, including a multi-party system.
Head of state	The current president is Viktor A. Yushchenko.
Currency	Ukraine's currency is the Hryvna.
Standard of living	Per capita GDP (on a purchasing power parity basis) in 2007 was \$6,900. The standard of living has fallen sharply in Ukraine since independence, although there have been some signs of an economic upturn.

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Overview, Continued

Map The following graphic is a map of Ukraine.



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 is called "Right Bank Ukraine" (that is, left or right as you face south, toward the Black Sea).
-

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% Ukrainian, 40% Russian) but mainly Russian speaking. It has close links with neighboring areas of southern Russia.

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Regions in Ukraine, Continued

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 widely spoken.

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 sizable 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. Ukraine had the literal meaning of borderland, for that was how Russians, Poles, and Turks all perceived the area.

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Historical background of Ukraine, Continued

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 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.

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Historical background of Ukraine, Continued

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 this 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.

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Historical background of Ukraine, Continued

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.

World War II

Ukraine was devastated during the Second World War, with deaths in the millions.

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.

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Historical background of Ukraine, Continued

Full independence

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% 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, another factor is 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.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Ukraine, Continued

"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, parliament endorsed the formation of a new coalition government with Donetsk region governor Viktor Yanukovich as prime minister. While the government included representatives of several factions, the Donetsk clan was the dominant force.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Ukraine, Continued

Challenges

Ukraine's democracy has faced serious challenges, despite its abundance of parties:

- President and parliament have not worked together effectively.
 - Corruption has been rampant. In 2004, a U.S. court convicted former Prime Minister Lazarenko of money laundering, wire fraud, and 24 other charges. Lazarenko embezzled \$114 million while in office.
 - Scores of opposition politicians and journalists have disappeared or died under suspicious circumstances. There were widespread protests over the fate of journalist Georgy Gongadze, who disappeared in September 2000. President Kuchma was accused of ordering his murder.
 - Involvement of organized crime in Ukrainian politics.
 - Regional divisions between east and west.
-

Domestic politics in Ukraine, Continued

2004 presidential election

In the October election to determine Kuchma's successor, Yanukovich received 40.03% of the vote, while "Our Ukraine" leader (and former prime minister) Viktor Yushchenko received 39.16%. However, since no candidate received more than 50% of the vote, a second round was required and held in November. The first round of voting had not met OSCE, COE and other European standards for democratic elections, according to an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM).

The results of the November round were disputed. The Ukrainian Central Election Commission said Yanukovich won 49.2%, with Yushchenko receiving 46.69% of the vote. The opposition claimed fraud. The IEOM stated that the elections had not met international standards.

Following the announcement of the electoral results, a massive campaign of pro-Yushchenko protests and civil disobedience spread throughout the country, especially in the western regions and in Kyiv, which was named the "Orange Revolution." When the Ukrainian Constitutional Court decided (like the IEOM) that the election outcome was fraudulent, the government-supported candidate, Yanukovich, decided that there was no alternative but to accept another second round of voting.

In December 2004, Yushchenko won the repeat election sanctioned by the Constitutional Court. He captured 52% of the vote, compared to 44% for Yanukovich. The Electoral Commission verified the result in January 2005.



Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, 5 January 2005 (OSCE/BOBO)

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Ukraine, Continued

Yushchenko's first year

The new president initially faced serious challenges, including a possible hostile parliament. He also had to win the support of former rivals and build bridges with ethnic Russians and Russified Ukrainians living mostly in the east and south, including Crimea, in order to govern effectively. His choice of Yulia Tymoshenko, widely considered populist and anti-Russian, as Prime Minister did not ease his task.

Internationally, the new government received widespread support from the West. The OSCE CiO, Foreign Minister Rupel of Slovenia, welcomed Yushchenko's election and attended his inauguration.

In its first year, the new Ukrainian government faced political infighting, reports of continued corruption, a ballooning deficit, and reduced economic growth. Facing heavy criticism, Yushchenko fired Tymoshenko and dismissed the cabinet in September 2005 and nominated Dnipropetrovsk governor Yuri Yekhanurov as prime minister. The Yekhanurov government was ousted by Parliament in January 2006 over the issue of the price Ukraine would pay Russia for natural gas, and served in a caretaker status until the March 2006 parliamentary elections.



Leading Ukrainian parliamentarian Yulia Tymoshenko, 5 January 2005 (OSCE/BOBO)

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Ukraine, Continued

March 2006 parliamentary elections

Yanukovich's Party of Regions won 31.37% of the vote, with the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc unexpectedly coming in second with 22.44% of the vote, and President Yushchenko's Our Ukraine Bloc a disappointing 14.44%. The Socialist Party won 5.86% and the Communist Party won 3.63%, with none of the other 45 parties contesting the election passing the 3% hurdle to enter Parliament.

The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) concluded that the elections were conducted basically in line with OSCE and international standards. This election further consolidated the December 2004 breakthrough for the conduct of democratic elections in Ukraine, according to the IEOM.

"Orange Revolution" partners form government

After months of negotiations, the Tymoshenko Bloc, Yushchenko's Our Ukraine, and the Socialist Party, the partners in the "Orange Revolution," formed a coalition, despite personal animosity and policy differences.. To seal the agreement, Tymoshenko was made prime minister and Our Ukraine was allowed to name the speaker of the legislature.

After objections from pro-Russian parties, the Socialist Party defected from the coalition to join Our Ukraine, leading to several more months of negotiations. Finally, in August Yushchenko and Yanukovich's parties formed a coalition in which Yanukovich took over as prime minister, and the Tymoshenko Bloc went into the opposition.

Yushchenko and Yanukovich continued to clash over issues such as relations with Europe, the appointment of ministers, and the lead role and powers of the president and prime minister. Yushchenko eventually opted to dissolve parliament in April 2007 and set new elections.

Yanukovich and his parliamentary majority rejected the decree. The conflict over who had executive power rose to a new high. Yushchenko fired the Prosecutor-General, while Yanukovich's Minister of Interior ally sent special police to push out the security guards the president had sent to guard the Prosecutor-General's office. Yushchenko's threat to bring in loyal troops pushed the confrontation to a compromise. By early June parliamentary had passed legislation that was signed by the president to hold new parliamentary elections on September 30.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Ukraine, Continued

2007 parliamentary elections

Although the Party of Regions won the most seats (175) in the September elections, an alliance of the two parties associated with the “Orange Revolution,” Yulia Tymoshenko’s Bloc BYuT (with 156 seats) and Our Ukraine-Peoples Self-Defense Bloc NUNS (with 72 seats) won a majority and were able to form a government. The Party of Regions was pushed into the opposition. The Communist Party of Ukraine won 27 seats and the Ltyvyn Bloc with 20 seats were the only other parties of the 20 contesting the election that made the 3% required minimum. Over 63% of registered voters cast their ballots in the election.

The International Election Observation Monitoring Mission (including OSCE’s ODIHR) reported that the elections were conducted mostly in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. Areas of concern noted were amendments to the Election Law (procedures for compiling voter lists, provisions on home voting, and provisions for removing voters who crossed the state border and did not return before 26 September), the inadequate quality of voter lists, and possible loss of the right to vote by voters who crossed state borders after 1 August.

Tymoshenko returns as prime minister

Tymoshenko narrowly won election in parliament as prime minister by a majority plus one vote on December 2007. All the opposition parliamentarians –Party of Regions, Communist Party of Ukraine and Lytvin Bloc - voted solidly against her. She was able to get the full support of all the NUNS parliamentarians only thanks to pressure by Yushchenko on Tymoshenko critics. There are increasing reports that NUNS may split.

Tymoshenko- Yushchenko rivalry

By June 2008, the Tymoshenko-Yushchenko relationship was increasingly frayed. Tymoshenko’s BYuT blockaded parliament in May to protest what it termed the “sabotage” of government policies. BYuT’s blockade prevented the president from giving his annual address, which had not happened since Ukraine’s independence from the USSR.

In addition, Tymoshenko’s BYuT appeared ready to join the opposition Party of Regions (PRU) in supporting constitutional amendments to strengthen the power of parliament. This appeared to end Yushchenko’s longstanding hopes to rebuild presidential powers reduced by the parliament’s 2004-06 constitutional reforms.

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 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).

Continued on next page

Foreign relations in Ukraine, Continued

Ukraine's ambiguous geopolitical position

Ukraine has steered a cautious 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 for years. 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 significant 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.

Continued on next page

Foreign relations in Ukraine, Continued

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. A statement in May 2004 by President Kuchma that Ukraine hopes to join NATO led to protest demonstrations.

By way of compromise, Ukraine has remained a member of the CIS but blocked its development into an effective supranational union. Ukraine has been willing to cooperate with other post-Soviet states only on conditions that preserved its full sovereignty. For example, Ukraine has rejected Russia's view that CIS member-states are collectively responsible for defending the "external borders of the CIS."

Nevertheless, relations between Ukraine and Russia became closer up to 2004 and there were signs of a shift in Ukraine's foreign relations toward Russia and the CIS. In September 2003, Ukraine entered into an economic union with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. The union was to be formed in stages, starting with a free trade zone and progressing to a customs union and eventually a zone of free movement of goods, services, labor, and capital.

Continued on next page

Foreign relations in Ukraine, Continued

Foreign policy after the 2004 presidential election

The intervention by Russian President Putin supporting the “victory” of Yanukovich in the first running of the second round election created a backlash in Ukraine, especially in the western regions. The eventual victory by Yushchenko, and Putin’s evident displeasure at the outcome and at the involvement of the West and of the OSCE in Ukraine’s electoral process increased these tensions at the beginning of 2005.

After the Orange Revolution, hopes of rapid integration into NATO and, perhaps, even the EU were tempered, although Ukraine publicly maintained its European orientation. Relations with Europe were set back, however, when the pro-Russian Party of Regions entered the government. Ukraine also continued to push for WTO membership. Ukraine did, however, end its 2-year deployment of 1,650 troops in Iraq in December 2005, fulfilling a Yanukovich election promise.

In 2006, in response to Russian threats to raise the price of gas, the Ukrainian energy minister announced that Ukraine would lessen dependence on Russian gas in favor of imports from Central Asia. Parallel to this, Ukraine has been pushing development of an Odessa-Brody pipeline to convey Caspian oil. This would further reduce Russia’s near monopoly on regional energy transit both to Eastern Europe and markets further to the west. Nonetheless, Ukraine and Russia once again were locked in a dispute over payments to Russia for gas in March 2008. Russia’s GAZPROM cut off gas shipments to Ukraine for two days until a settlement was reached with Ukraine’s state oil and gas company Naftohaz Ukrainy.

Ukraine’s NATO aspirations

The NATO-Ukraine relationship dates back to 1991, soon after Ukraine’s independence when it joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. Ukraine joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace in 1994. In 1997, the NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership identified areas for consultation and cooperation, and established the NATO-Ukraine Commission. A NATO-Ukraine Action Plan was adopted in 2002, and an Intensified Dialogue launched in 2005.

Although strongly supported by the U.S., Ukraine was not offered a Membership Action Plan at the March 2008 Bucharest NATO Summit. The Summit did pledge, however, that Ukraine would eventually be offered membership.

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 restrained 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.

In March 2006, however, several pro-Russian legislators declared Russian a "regional" language. Yushchenko called the change in language status unconstitutional.

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.

Continued on next page

Crimean problems, Continued

Crimean Tatars return to homeland

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 established makeshift settlements.

Crimean Tatar and Slavic tension

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. Disputes over land on the southern coast of the peninsula sparked violent ethnic clashes in the spring of 2004. Besides the land question, there are other contentious issues, such as the political representation of the Crimean Tatars and the status of their language. Other confrontations have been triggered by police attempts to remove Crimean Tatar settlements and by criminals killing Crimean Tatar traders for refusing to pay protection money.

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Crimean problems, Continued

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 by Nikita Khrushchev 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.

Russian demonstration against NATO in Crimea

Demonstrations resulted in 2006, the last time Ukraine and NATO tried to stage exercises in the Black Sea. Russians in Crimea demonstrated against the pro-western government and NATO after a U.S. Navy cargo ship delivered equipment to the port of Feodosiya in preparation for military exercises. The Crimean parliament symbolically voted to declare the peninsula a NATO-free zone. Tensions were defused when the pro-Russian Party of Regions entered into the central government coalition.

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Crimean problems, Continued

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 Co-ordinator 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

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.

Continued on next page

Crimean problems, Continued

**Crimean
Tatars status
remains
unresolved**

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

After the Orange Revolution, a power-sharing agreement marked one step forward in interethnic relations in Crimea, providing Crimean Tatars with two local ministerial posts as well the position of deputy prime minister. The agreement also provided for the establishment of native-language media.

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, the Maydan, 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. The Maydan was the principal site of the demonstrations supporting the Orange Revolution during the 2004 presidential elections.



Mass demonstration during the Orange Revolution, 2004. Christina Redko.

Continued on next page

Ukraine culture, Continued

Baby Yar

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.



Baby Yar Memorial

Continued on next page

Ukraine culture, Continued

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.

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Ukraine culture, Continued

Geography

Over a third of the country's people live in the countryside, mostly in large villages of 1,000 to 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 *vushka* 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

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

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

Moldova

Overview

At a glance

The following table describes geographic and demographic information for Moldova.

Item	Description
Area	13,000 square miles
Location	<p>Moldova borders on Ukraine to the north, east, and south, and on Romania to the west.</p> <p>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.</p>
Climate, terrain, and natural resources	<p>Terrain</p> <p>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</p> <p>As in Ukraine, rich soil and a mild climate provide excellent conditions for agriculture.</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Moldova is best known for its grapes and wines. There is some brown coal (lignite) and minerals.</p>
Capital and largest cities	Chisinau is the capital of Moldova. The second largest city is Tiraspol, the main industrial center of the Transdniester region.
Population	3.581 million (estimated 2007), not including 400,000 citizens working abroad and 555,000 residents of the Transdniester region

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Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Languages	Moldovan is virtually identical to Romanian, which belongs to the Romance group of the Indo-European language 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 Transdniester region).
Ethnic composition of the population	<p>According to the 2004 census (which did not include the Transdniester region):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moldovans/Romanians 78.2%• Ukrainians 8.4%• Russians 5.8%• Gagauz 4.4%• Bulgarian 1.9%• Other 1.3% <p>A separate census held in the Transdniester region recorded Moldovans at 32% of the region's population; Russians, 30%; and Ukrainians, 29%.</p> <p>Gagauz live mainly in the area around Comrat, profess Orthodox Christianity, and speak a form of classical Ottoman Turkish.</p>

Continued on next page

Overview, Continued

At a glance (continued)

Item	Description
Language and Ethnicity	Moldovan and Romanian are basically the same language, yet Moldovans are considered an ethnic group distinct from Romanians. Moldovans are divided on this matter. Some regard themselves 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. 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% of the population. Russian-speakers form the majority in the Transdnier region, though many also live in the capital Chisinau and other places.
System of government	Since July 2000, Moldova has been a purely parliamentary democracy. There is a president, but he is elected by parliament.
Head of state	The current president is Vladimir Voronin.
Currency	The currency of Moldova is the Leu.
Standard of living	Estimated per capita GDP (on a purchasing power parity basis) in 2007 was \$2,200.

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Overview, Continued

Map The following graphic is a map of Moldova.



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 Transdniester 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 Transdniester 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.

Continued on next page

Historical background of Moldova, Continued

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 Transdnierster 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 Transdnierster 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) 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.

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Historical background of Moldova, Continued

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 Transdniester 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 Transdniester 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 Transdniester 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 Transdniester region immediately responded by declaring independence in its turn as the Transdniester 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 Transdnjesters--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 Transdnjest 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.

Elections

Dimitru Croitor won the 1999 elections and started using the rights granted the Gagauzia governor in the 1994 law. Tensions erupted, as central government authorities were unwilling to go along with the changes. Croitor resigned in 2002 under pressure from Chisinau. He was not allowed by the Central Elections Council to run again for governor. Mihail Formuzal was elected Gagauzia governor in 2007.

The 'frozen' Transdniester conflict

Transdniester region

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 Transdniester Guard, volunteers from Romania (with the Moldovans), and Cossack volunteers from Russia (with the Transdnjesters). The Russian 14th Army, deployed on the Left Bank, remained officially neutral, but its members sympathized with the Transdnjesters 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 Transdnjesters contingents.

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The 'frozen' Transdniester conflict, Continued

Negotiations and OSCE

Hostilities have not resumed. Neither, however, have numerous rounds of negotiations between the sides made much progress toward a settlement. Negotiations have been conducted between the Moldovan government and the Transdniestrian authorities, under the joint auspices of Russia and the OSCE, with a Ukrainian representative also present from 1996 onward. (The U.S. and EU joined the process as Observers in 2005.) The OSCE mission has played an active role, keeping channels of communication open and attempting to mediate a lasting political settlement between the sides. It has also sought to monitor human rights in all parts of the country, including Transdniestria.

From an early stage Moldovan leaders have accepted that the Transdniester 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 proposal on the status of Transdniestria was presented in 1993 by the OSCE mission and accepted by Moldova, but not by the Transdniestrian authorities.

[The OSCE Mission to Moldova](#)

Continued on next page

The 'frozen' Transdniester conflict, Continued

Negotiations between Moldova and Transdniester leader

Concessions offered by successive Moldovan governments have never been enough to satisfy Transdniester 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 Voronin met and agreed to dismantle checkpoints, rebuild bridges across the Dniester, and cooperate in the economic field.

OSCE proposal for federation

In 2002, the OSCE Mission proposed a federal solution to settle the Transdniester conflict. Several rounds of negotiations followed between the Moldovan government and Transdniestrian authorities with mediators from the OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine.

Moldova federation plan

A 2003 Moldovan plan for a demilitarized federal state in which Transnistria and Gagauzia would have full autonomy and Moldovan and Russian would both be official languages was put forward. The OSCE did not endorse the plan due to a lack of consensus among its member states.

Russian Kozak plan

Later in 2003, President Voronin turned to Russia and asked it to put forward a proposal for a federation, which was announced as the Kozak plan. (Putin aide Dmitry Kozak was the author of the document.) Transdniester leaders accepted the plan, rather than insisting on their earlier demand for a loose confederation; the Kozak plan envisaged an equal or symmetric federation. In any case, the Russian proposal was equally favorable to the Transdniester authorities. In the face of U.S. and EU opposition, Voronin turned away from the Russian plan.

2005 Ukrainian initiative

In May 2005, new Ukrainian President Yushchenko proposed a new seven-point peace plan to reintegrate Transnistria into Moldova; Ukraine's stepped-up involvement was publicly welcomed by both Transdniestrian and Moldovan authorities.

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The ‘frozen’ Transdniester conflict, Continued

5+2 Negotiating process launched In October 2005, the EU and U.S. joined the negotiating process as observers. The process thus became the 5 + 2 format (Moldova, Transdniestria, OSCE, Russia and Ukraine + U.S. and EU).

Side deal with Russia? During mid-2007, media reports asserted that the Voronin government was again engaged in secret bilateral talks on a Transdniestria package deal with Russia outside the 5+2 format.

2008 sudden Voronin-Smirnov meeting Moldovan President Voronin and Transdniestrian leader Smirnov unexpectedly met on April 11, 2008 for the first time in seven years. According to official reports, they agreed:

- To form confidence-building working groups that will propose concrete projects in infrastructure development, road construction, security and disarmament, and in the social, cultural and humanitarian fields
- On concrete steps to enhance the negotiating process
- Moldova would ask the U.S. and EU to cancel their travel bans on Transdniestrian leaders, and that Transdniestria would cancel its restrictions on the entry and freedom of movement for all Moldovan officials

They did not at this point make any public comments on resumption of the 5+2 negotiating process.

Smirnov reportedly put forward a “Treaty of Friendship Between Moldova and Transnistria” which treated them as no-equals, and included Moldova’s recognition of Transdniestria’s secession and a Russian military presence there. These are all positions that Moldova has rejected before.

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The 'frozen' Transdniester conflict, Continued

Russian withdrawal promised

Moldova has sought the withdrawal of all Russian forces together with their equipment. In 1994, Russia agreed, over Transdniester 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. Russia did not complete its withdrawal as promised. The deadline was then extended. Of the 20,000 troops in the 14th Army at the time of independence, about 1,600 still remain.

In 2006, Moldova's president called for Russia to withdraw peacekeeping troops from the region, a demand rejected by Russia's defense minister. In September voters in Transdniester chose independence and eventual union with Russia in a referendum. The results were recognized by Russia but not by Moldova or the EU.

Old munitions, weapons, vehicles, and equipment

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



OSCE personnel inspect a train of Russian munitions before their shipment out of Transnistria, 4 October 2002 OSCE.

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The ‘frozen’ Transdniester conflict, Continued

EU Border Assistance Mission

A substantial majority of OSCE participating states, in the absence of full consensus, expressed great disappointment that the withdrawal of Russian forces from Transdniestria slowed considerably in 2004. In addition, CiO Passy noted at the OSCE ministerial meeting in December 2004 that “most ministers” supported an initiative on Border and Customs Monitoring on the Ukrainian border with Moldova (i.e., Transdniestria), intended to facilitate the often interrupted flow (by the Transdniestrian authorities) of traffic on roads and railway lines across this border.

Subsequently, Moldova and Ukraine asked the EU to provide advice and training to their border and customs services to help them prevent smuggling, trafficking and customs fraud. A EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) was established in December 2005, and currently consists of about 100 EU police personnel.

In early 2006 Ukraine tightened its border with Transdniester to reduce smuggling, at the urging of Moldova and the EU.

U.S. favors multilateral peacekeepers to replace Russian force

In June 2007 the U.S. suggested replacement of the current Russian peacekeeping force by a broader more genuine multilateral force, which would also include Russian participation.

Russia claims it has satisfied all its Moldova obligations

Speaking to the media after the Bucharest NATO-Russia Council Meeting in April 2008, Russian President Putin asserted that Russia’s obligations in Moldova were limited to scrapping or evacuating heavy weaponry from Transdniestria, that it had fully complied in this, and that this compliance had been internationally verified. He also said that Russia was obligated to withdraw all its forces from Moldova by 2002 (extended to 2003), but it maintains “peacekeeping” forces there and has transferred part of its heavy weaponry to Transdniestrian forces, and the latter blocks international verification or inspections there.

Ethnic and language issues in Moldova

Citizenship

Citizenship has never been an issue in Moldova in the way 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 descendents and to those who resided in Soviet Moldova before 1990.

An ethnic conflict?

Local observers have questioned whether the Transdnier conflict should be regarded as an ethnic conflict. They point out that many Moldovans support the Transdnier side, while many Russians support the Moldovan side. Indeed, 40% of the Left Bank population is Moldovan.

While 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 not seeking to embrace either of its neighbors, this contrast no longer exists.

If the Transdnier leaders want (and continue to be able) 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. Moreover, the Transdnier authorities are able to maintain the status quo because they have the support of the Russian Federation.

Attitudes in “right bank” Moldova

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 fifteen years ago. Moreover, Russian-speakers in the capital Chisinau have always been less hostile to Moldovan independence than their counterparts on the Left Bank.

Language policy in Moldova

In 1989, Moldovan was declared the sole state language. Proficiency in Moldovan was made a condition of state employment in 1990 (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 Popular Christian Democratic Party (PPCD), the main opposition party.

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Ethnic and language issues in Moldova, Continued

Dispute over language rights in Transdniestria

Moldovan, alongside Russian and Ukrainian, is an official language in Transdniestria, though state schools are required to teach it in the Cyrillic and not the Latin script. There are, however, seven schools in the Transdniestrian region that use the Latin alphabet in teaching Romanian/Moldovan. These schools are funded by the Moldovan Government and follow the Moldovan curriculum, but have periodically been faced with closure by the Transdniestrian authorities.

Supporting parent rights to choose the language of instruction, the Mission, in cooperation with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, reached an agreement with the authorities in Transdniestria in 2003. This agreement should have allowed the schools to register and function without difficulty. Transdniestrian officials, however, did not observe this agreement or an amended version mediated by the Mission later that year and tried to close the schools in 2004. In July, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Rolf Ekeus condemned the forced closure of a Moldovan-language high school in Tiraspol.

Due to the Mission's efforts, the schools were able to reopen. In 2005, the schools received permanent registration based on the 2003 agreement. However, one Moldovan school remains under the control of the Transdniestrian authorities and disputes continue on questions such as curricula. Seeking a solution of this issue remains high on the Mission's agenda.

OSCE language use

In Moldova, the OSCE uses the term the “state language” to avoid calling it either Moldovan or Romanian, either of which may be divisive. Similarly, although the OSCE always refers to Transdniestria, it is important to note that it is Trans (across) the Dniester only from the perspective of Chisinau, Bucharest, and other points west. Viewed from Moscow, Kyiv, or even Tiraspol, the region is not Transdniestria, and is thus called in Russian and other Slavic languages “Pridnestrov’ia” or “by” or “near” the Dniester. Anyone trying to mediate in this region must be sensitive to these linguistic usages in order to avoid getting into trouble.

Domestic politics in Moldova

Introduction

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, politics in Moldova were polarized between the Moldovan Popular Front (renamed in February 1992 the Popular Christian Democratic Party (PPCD) on one side and communist and post-communist forces on the other. From about 1993 a realignment began to take shape.

1994 parliamentary elections

In May 1993, the moderate nationalists, who opposed union with Romania, were expelled from the PPCD and founded the Social-Democratic Party of Moldova. In the parliamentary elections, the PPCD lost most of its support, retaining a mere 7.5% of the vote.

Two post-communist parties -- the Democratic Agrarian Party (43%), whose deputies were mostly village mayors and collective farm managers, and the former Communist Party, renamed the Socialist Party (22%) won the elections. 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% threshold necessary for a party to enter parliament.

1996 presidential elections

Petru Lucinski, who had been First Secretary of the Communist Party of Moldavia from November 1989 to August 1991, defeated President Mircea Snegur.

Continued independence of Moldova

A month after the election, a referendum was held in which over 90% 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.

1998 parliamentary elections

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% of the vote, did better than any other single party, a governing coalition of center-right parties (together representing 45% of voters) was formed under the name "Alliance for Democracy and Reforms," led by former President Snegur.

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Domestic politics in Moldova, Continued

Elections largely free and fair

International observers have assessed Moldovan elections as largely free and fair. For most of the 1990s, Moldova 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 even stronger. In 2000, parliament amended the constitution to enable it to elect the president.

2001 parliamentary elections

The Communist Party won over 50% of the vote on pledges to bring Moldova closer to Russia and restore living standards to Soviet-era standards. The communists gained more than two-thirds of the seats in parliament, while the PPCD won only 11 seats. In March, the new parliament chose Communist Party leader Vladimir Voronin as president.

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Domestic politics in Moldova, Continued

Government pressures on opposition

In January 2002, the communist government responded to opposition demonstrations against compulsory Russian language classes in schools by suspending temporarily the activity of the PPCD. Relations between the government and the opposition were tense, and independent media (especially radio stations) were harassed.

2005 parliamentary elections

The elections produced a 56-seat majority (out of 101 seats) for the Communist Party. The ruling Communist Party won 46% (down slightly) on a campaign emphasizing a pro-European orientation, the Democratic Moldova Bloc won 29% (doubling), and the PPCD won nearly 10% (no change) of the vote. Only these three of the 15 parties contesting the elections, cleared the 6% legal threshold. The International Election Observation Mission concluded that the elections were generally in compliance with most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international election standards.

Voronin reelected April 2005

Voronin easily won reelection as president with 75 votes, 14 more than required.

Continuing pressure on opposition

Amnesty International criticized Moldova in September 2006 for the arrest of nine NGO activists who held an anti-government demonstration.

Continued on next page

Domestic politics in Moldova, Continued

2007 local elections

The Communist Party took about 33 % of the votes, which was considerably less than the 54 % it had garnered four years earlier. The Our Moldova Party came in second with 14 % of the votes.

The International Election Observation Mission noted that the local elections gave voters a genuine choice, and were generally well administered. Other aspects of the elections, however, fell short of international commitments. Intimidation of candidates was one of the major shortcomings. Media coverage of state authorities benefited pro-government candidates. There were also cases where local authorities failed to guarantee equal conditions for all parties and candidates.

First woman prime minister

In March 2008, President Voronin nominated Deputy Prime Minister Zinaida Greceanii, another Communist, as the first woman prime minister in Moldova's history.

Foreign relations in Moldova

Economy dependent on the former Soviet Union

During the years after independence, Moldova's economy remained highly dependent on the rest of the former Soviet Union, and on Russia in particular. Romania did not prove viable as an alternative economic partner.

The breakdown of economic links with other post-Soviet republics also 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 Moldova distanced itself from Romania after 1994 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.

Eurasian Economic Community

In 1992 Moldova became an observer in the Eurasian Economic Community, the customs union of the core CIS countries.

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Foreign relations in Moldova, Continued

Relations with the West

Moldova's turn to Russia neither helped it deal with its dire economic situation nor helped it find a solution to the Transdnistria problem. After 1999, Moldova increasingly started turning to the West for solutions, both economic and political. Moldova became a partner country with the EU's European Neighborhood Plan (ENP), with a joint EU-Moldova ENP Action Plan.

In 2005, the ruling Communists made a complete reversal in their policy line and campaigned on a pro-European and markedly anti-Russian platform. EU officials have encouraged domestic reforms, holding out hope for Moldova's eventual membership in the organization.

Relations with Romania

Romania's entry to the European Union at the start of 2007 made Moldova an EU neighbor. This does not seem to have facilitated a more productive relationship. Moldova-Romania relations have been marked by acrimony for the last year.

Mini-quiz

Multiple choice The focus of the OSCE Mission in Moldova is:

- the Transdnistria 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.



The older generation of Chisinau, Moldova's capital, on a spring afternoon in the Central Park. OSCE/Ayhan Evrensel

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.

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Moldova culture, Continued

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.



A woman sells chicken in a market near Chisinau in Moldova, 2002 (OSCE/ Neil Brennan)
