



*The impact of dissident regions on European Union
Rapprochement*

Master Thesis
Faculty of Humanities
Leiden University
Prof.dr. A.W.M. Gerrits

Gijs Houben
S1114581
g.houben@outlook.com
Words: 15638

Much has been written about dissident regions such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia or Transnistria. Unfortunately until today little attention is given to Gagauzia, a dissident region that rejected the current Moldovan rapprochement towards the EU in its local referendum, organized in 2014. In contemporary academic literature very little is known about the influence of dissident regions like Gagauzia, Transnistria or Abkhazia on the EU rapprochement of their sovereign nation. Along with interviews and other primary sources a model is provided to discover the influence of the three mentioned dissident regions on the EU rapprochement. This research, at least, enriches the current existing academic literature regarding Gagauzia, at the same time it deeply emphasises the limited influence of dissident regions on sovereign nations' EU rapprochement.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Research question	4
1.2 Research contribution	5
2. Methodology	6
2.1 Concepts & variables	6
2.2 Case Selection	6
2.3 Data Collection & methods	7
2.4 Generalisation	8
3. Theoretical framework	10
3.1 Rapprochement towards the European Union	10
3.2 Dissident regions	11
3.2.1 Influence of dissident regions	13
3.3 The dissident regions	15
3.3.1 Abkhazia	15
3.3.2 Transnistria	18
3.3.3 Gagauzia	23
3.4 Moldova and the European Union	28
3.5 Georgia and the European Union	32
4. Analysis	34
4.1 Does the EU recognize the dissident regions?	35
4.2 Did the sovereign state reduced its cooperation with the EU?	36
4.3 Did the public opinion within this region towards the EU change over de past five years?	37
4.3.1 EU - Transnistria	37
4.3.2 EU - Abkhazia	38
4.3.3 EU - Gagauzia	39
4.4 Did the public opinion within the sovereign state, towards the EU, change over the past five years?	40
4.4.1 Moldova	40
4.4.2 Georgia	42
4.5 Do the dissident regions benefit from closer cooperation between the sovereign state and the EU?	43
4.6 Is EU rapprochement the only reason for the region's dissidence?	46
4.7 Is there a third party that could influence the relationship between the dissident region and the EU?	46
4.7.1 Russia - Abkhazia	46
4.7.2 Russia - Transnistria	47
4.7.3 Russia - Gagauzia	48
4.7.4 Passportization	49
4.8 Did this region organize events to sabotage EU rapprochement?	50
4.9 Did the relations between the sovereign state and the dissident region changed over the past five years?	51
4.10 Is the region mentioned as an obstacle in the AA?	52
4.11 Does the EU see these dissident regions as a problem for accession?	52
5. Conclusion	56
Bibliography	60

List of Abbreviations

AA	- Association Agreement
DCFTA	- Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement
EACU	- Eurasian Customs Union
EAEU	- Eurasian Economic Union
EaP	- Eastern Partnership
EC	- European Commission
EEAS	- European External Action Service
ENP	- European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	- European Union
EUBAM	- European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
MASSR	- Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
MSSR	- Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic
NATO	- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
SU	- Soviet Union
UN	- United Nations
US	- United States
WWII	- World War II

1. Introduction

On June 27, 2014, the European Union member states, together with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, gathered at an EU summit in Brussels to sign the Association Agreements. These three signatories became nation states after the collapse of the SU and are currently under political influence of both the Russian Federation and the EU. Additionally, all three have dissident regions on their territory and a significant part of their population that prefer a different geopolitical direction than their government. One of these dissident regions is the Autonomous Republic Gagauzia, a what seems to be a new dissident region at Southeastern Moldova. This region appears to be anti-EU, portrayed clearly in the referendum held at February 2, 2014, organized because of dissatisfaction with Moldovan rapprochement towards the EU. Moreover, the autonomous republic wanted to portray it could influence Moldovan foreign policy by organizing this referendum (Calus 2014, 4). These anti-EU and pro-Russian sentiments in Gagauzia are easy to determine. Therefor the question is, does a tiny dissident region have the ability to influence the EU-Moldova rapprochement. This thesis aims to research the possible influence of a dissident region on EU rapprochement of its sovereign state.

1.1 Research question

In short, dissident regions are non-state actors that dissociate in various ways because they mainly disagree with the policies of the government or the whole nation to which they originally belong. There are many dissident regions in Eastern Europe, two on Moldovan territory: Gagauzia and Transnistria; and two on Georgian territory: Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This thesis places a comprehensive focus on Gagauzia and the influence that this region might have on Moldova's EU rapprochement, this makes 'dissident regions' and 'EU rapprochement' the most important concepts. In order to cover the broader angle of dissident regions and their influence both Abkhazia and Transnistria will be added as control cases. All three regions are covered by the following research question:

Do the dissident regions Abkhazia, Gagauzia, and Transnistria influence the rapprochement of their sovereign state towards the European Union?

In short, the word *rapprochement* is used because it reflects the increased cooperation and involvement of the non-member state with the EU. The word is preferred over integration

because this term emphasizes increased cooperation among EU member states. The EU sees this rapprochement with non-memberstates as the opportunity to work with the partners to reduce poverty and create an area of shared prosperity and values based on deeper economic integration (European Commission 2003). Next to this rapprochement is characterized by increased diplomatic relations and agreements, such as EUBAM¹, EU Eastern Partnership, and the Association Agreement.

1.2 Research contribution

The goals of this thesis, achieved by answering the research question, are to innovate and contribute to contemporary academic literature. The innovatory aspect of this research addresses the limited research done into the influence of dissident regions on internal policies of their sovereign state. Currently, most research on dissident regions concerns conflictstudies and the possible future outcomes of that conflict. This research innovates in its aspect of comparing de-facto states (Abkhazia and Transnistria) with non-de-facto states (Gagauzia).

The contributory aspect of this research concerns Gagauzia's poor coverage in contemporary academic literature. Poor coverage occurred because of Gagauzia's quiet existence and its turmoil being submerged by other issues at world stage such as Ebola and the Crimean secession. Besides this, Gagauzia is just a small region at southern Moldova with about 150,000 inhabitants, therefor initial world focus is not on this region. Since not much has been written about Gagauzia, this research will be contributory to academic literature since it has a major focus on Gagauzia but also determines the influence of dissident regions on EU rapprochement.

¹ EUBAM is a border assistance mission in both Moldova and Ukraine in order to assist these nations in their struggles with criminal activities and smuggling around their borders.

2. Methodology

2.1 Concepts & variables

The research goal is to determine whether or not Gagauzia influences EU rapprochement of Moldova. Both Transnistria and Abkhazia will be analyzed simultaneously because they function as control cases. Figure 1 illustrates the research model:

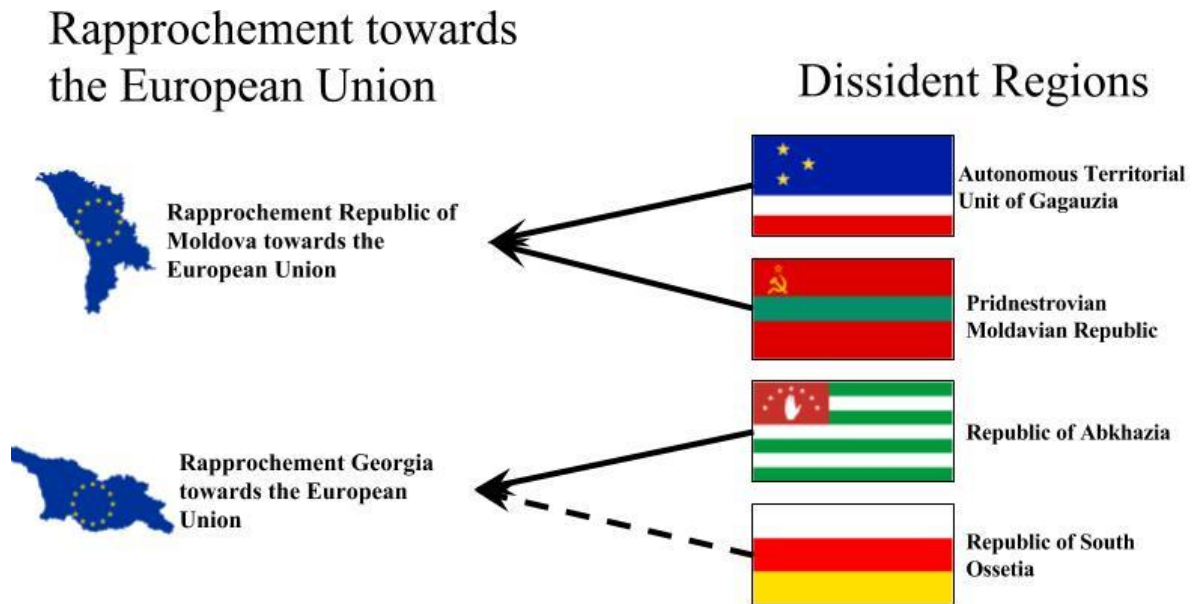


Figure 1. Model of influence of the Georgian and Moldovan dissident regions

The model reveals the dependent and independent variables. The dependent variables are the “Rapprochement of the Republic of Moldova towards the European Union” and the “Rapprochement of Georgia towards the European Union”. The independent variables concerning Moldova are the “Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia” and the “Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic” (Transnistria) and, for Georgia, the “Republic of Abkhazia”. As mentioned earlier the most important concepts are “Rapprochement towards the European Union” and “Dissident Region”. The concepts are both explained extensively at the theoretical framework.

2.2 Case Selection

The cases to be researched are Abkhazia, Transnistria, and Gagauzia, of which the latter is the main case since the initial question is whether Gagauzia influences the Moldova EU rapprochement. Gagauzia was chosen as the main case because it is poorly covered in

contemporary academic literature and because it gained my personal attention. Many scholars have stated that Gagauzia might be the next Crimea or Abkhazia and that the regio has an important, or even decisive, role in Moldova. I would like to discover whether these statements are true or just rough speculation.

Figure 1 shows South Ossetia connected to Georgia with a dotted line. This region will not be used as a case due to the maximum allowed length of this thesis. Specifically South Ossetia is excluded because, as a case, Abkhazia has more similarities with Transnistria and Gagauzia such as the level of openness, Russian interference, violence, and international attention. Secondly, Ukraine, Armenia, and Azerbaijan are absent in the figure. Although they have dissident regions on their territories, they will not be part of this thesis because these nations do not have the same level of European involvement and rapprochement as Georgia and Moldova. Ukraine's dissident regions, Luhansk and Donetsk, are excluded because they are at war, which means the situation is heavily subjected to change.

2.3 Data Collection & Methods

To understand the political perspectives of Abkhazia, Transnistria and Gagauzia a historical overview combined with a brief explanation of the current political climate is provided. Next to this also a brief historical overview of the EU rapprochement of both Moldova and Georgia are outlined in the theoretical framework. The topics mentioned indicate a qualitative nature, quantitative research towards the influence of dissident regions is difficult since this method often includes questionnaires, numbers, and statistics and use a larger sample size, this is less applicable to a research with just three cases. The qualitative method fits best because it is identified with in-depth interviews, literature research, and a small number of cases. During the theoretical framework review, data is collected by analyzing and summarizing primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are of importance because these sources are not subjected to interpretation and qualification.

As mentioned, Gagauzia is the primary case in this thesis and will be analyzed more extensively during this thesis. Both Abkhazia and Transnistria function as control variables. Citations and information gained from in-depth interviews with the people listed in Table 1 will be included during the forthcoming chapters. Some interviewees are not mentioned by

name because of the institution’s policies or personal preferences. Therefore, these people will be referenced by a pseudonym.

Table 1. Interviewees

Person	Function
Mihail Sirkeli	Founder and director of Pilgrim Demo NGO
Vitalii Vlah	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gagauzia
Vadim Pistrinciuc	Member of Moldovan parliament - PLDM
Viktor Anghelov	Regional Coordinator of Promolex in the South Moldovan region
Interviewee 4	Political Officer for EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova
Interviewee 5	Policy Officer for Crisis Management Initiative
Interviewee 6	Policy Analyst for Centre for European Policy Studies
Interviewee 7	Desk Officer for Moldova, Eastern Partnership Division - EEAS

2.4 Generalisation

The results of this thesis will be hard to generalize with other dissident regions because most of them have different characteristics such as political orientation, historical background and different actors involved. The results of this thesis might be applicable to the regions Luhansk, Donetsk, Crimea, South Ossetia, and Nagorno Karabakh. Results may differ but the overall scope will remain similar. A reason for this is that these regions have much in common when it comes to political orientation and historical background such as:

- An aversion to both the EU and the sovereign nation
- A high level of Russification
- A recent history in violent secession (succeeded or not)
- A characterization as dissident region within its sovereign state.

The outcome of the same research to these regions will probably give the same answer to the same research question if one uses cases other than Gagauzia, Abkhazia, or Transnistria. This is important because there are different dissident regions around this globe, such as Catalonia,

Tibet, or Balochistan, but they do not have the same similarities as the primary cases of this thesis. Therefore, generalization on these dissident regions will be hard or even impossible.

3. Theoretical framework

In order to create cohesion between the concepts and variables it is essential to provide a framework that ensures correct understanding the predominating concepts: “dissident regions” and “rapprochement towards the European Union”. A theoretical framework should function the following way (University of Southern California 2018):

A theoretical framework consists of concepts and, together with their definitions and reference to relevant scholarly literature, existing theory that is used for a particular study. The theoretical framework must demonstrate an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the topic of a research paper and that relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered.

In the next section, the different perspectives about dissident regions are explained and weighed against each other, followed by an explanation on how dissident regions influence policies or states, and what the specific concepts are and how they are related.

Dissident regions do not originate without any incidents or circumstances in the past. To understand the different dissident regions it is important to have a short historical overview of the specific regions in order to understand the context of their current dissidence. Therefor this theoretical framework provides the reader with a short historical overview of the regions Gagauzia, Transnistria, Abkhazia, but also the relations between the EU and both Moldova and Georgia.

3.1 Rapprochement towards the European Union

As mentioned earlier rapprochement is preferred over integration since this term is more related to increased cooperation among EU member states. Georgia and Ukraine are both not a member state, it is therefor better to use the word rapprochement. This term is best defined the following way (Collins Dictionary 2018):

A rapprochement is an increase in friendliness between two countries, groups, or people, especially after a period of unfriendliness.

This definition indicates that two actors develop their diplomatic relations and activities. It also mentions that there could be a period of unfriendliness prior to the period of rapprochement. In the cases of Georgia and Ukraine there are no recent detectable periodes of unfriendliness. Another definition of rapprochement is (Macmillan Dictionary 2018):

The development of greater understanding and friendship between two countries or groups.

This definition is in line with the previous one and also indicates that two actors develop their mutual activities and relations. The other resemblance between the two definitions is the fact that it is an ongoing process, rapprochement aims at a constant process of improving mutual relations.

Rapprochement is one part of the definition, the other part is the EU aspect of it. Using the previously mentioned definitions, EU rapprochement is an increase of mutual relations, greater understanding and friendship between the European Union and the non-member state. This increase in friendship and mutual relations come along with different policies of the EU towards this non-member state but also from the non-member state towards the EU. A good example of EU rapprochement between e.g. Ukraine and the EU is the Association agreement. In this agreement both parties agreed to align economic, trade and legislative policies and to intensify bilateral relations. Besides the AA there are more examples of EU rapprochement from EU side, such as: visa-free travel, financial assistance for non-member states or the Instrument for pre-accession Assistance. The other way around are e.g. diplomatic representation of a non-member state at the European Union, adopting policies agreed upon in the treaties and cooperation on justice, liberty and security. EU rapprochement is a concept coming from both the EU as the non-memberstate.

3.2 Dissident regions

Dissident regions have several similarities with de facto states. A de facto state operates as a normal state but lacks international recognition, though it has effective control over its territory and is capable of providing governmental services (Pegg 1998, 1). The definition of a de-facto state is applicable to Transnistria and Abkhazia but only partially to Gagauzia. Gagauzia is able to provide governmental services, but effective control is still provided by Moldova. Gagauzia is internationally recognized as an autonomous republic within Moldova. In general, autonomous republics are somewhat secluded from their sovereign state but still willing to cooperate, adopt national policies, and remain within the sovereign state.

Since Gagauzia is not a de-facto state, a definition that fits Abkhazia, Transnistria, and Gagauzia is necessary. One of the main characteristics of a dissident region is a poor relation with the sovereign state and vice versa, this seems logical but it is vital for the understanding of the relation between the region and the sovereign state (McLaughlin 2003). The divergence between the state and the dissident region is the following (McLaughlin 2003):

As sovereign actors, states exercise supreme authority within the international system and therefore are free to formulate domestic policies and conduct official relations with other states. Non-state (dissident) actors have no such official powers and ultimately come under the sovereign jurisdiction of one or more states. This means that all non-state actors, be they dissident or not, are subject, theoretically at least, to the power of states.

Thus, dissident actors theoretically fall under the control of the state. They are dissident because they resist most policies. Resistance complicates the relationship between both actors and often damages and embarrasses the leading position of the sovereign state and other hand strengthens the position of the dissident region (McLaughlin 2003). Resistance can be divided in violent protests, such as riots, revolution, and anti-establishment actions, and non-violent examples, such as strikes, demonstrations, and referenda, like the one organized in Gagauzia (Peters 2016, 21). As Shellman explains, a dissident region will do *almost* everything in its power to achieve the goals it pursues; violence can be included but is not a necessity (Peters 2016, 21). Furthermore, Shellman emphasizes governments will oppose policies from the dissidents and vice versa. According to McLaughlin the main characteristics are the following (Peters 2016, 21):

Regardless of the focus and the means of political opposition, dissident groups are inherently revisionist and challenge state power Theoretically, the sovereign power of states is supreme. In reality, non-state dissident actors seek to challenge this sovereign authority through political action. A balance of power therefore exists within states, pitting the relative strengths of states and non-state dissidents against each other.

The quotation above shows a rather theoretical aspect of dissident actors. Peters adds to McLaughlin's explanation that dissidence is associated with freedom of speech movements anti-establishment thoughts and often leads to (violent) protest and revolution. The cases in

this research differ in their actions: Abkhazia and Transnistria were more revolutionary; Gagauzia is more non-violent. This difference is explained by both Peters and Shellman. The latter emphasizes that dissidence is often a consequence of the rational behavior of individuals or leaders of the group since they base their argumentation and goals on day to day business (Peters 2016, 21). Peters clarifies the resistance of dissident actors in the following way (2016, 21):

Dissent is structurally or formally enabled in political systems through opposition parties often accompanied by social or political activism and forms of civil disobedience organized by those called “dissidents”.

Thus, the dissidence is structural and, therefore, will always remain hard to overrule. The cases in this thesis have a few elements in common:

1. Their affection towards their sovereign state
2. Their challenge of state power
3. Their threat or use of violence in their struggle for ideals and perspectives
4. Their existence primarily due to Russia
5. Their location on former Soviet territory.

3.2.1 Influence of dissentient regions

Dissident regions are often dissatisfied with their actual situation since they feel disadvantaged by the state on several aspects e.g. in receiving a fair share of the national budget or receiving the necessary attention with regard to internal struggles. Rosecrance researched dissidence and concluded that regional dissatisfaction can lead into two directions. The first direction is greater dependence on the metropolitan government and acceptance of a lesser important status, which means accepting subordination to the state (Rosecrance & Stein 2006, 4). The second direction concerns further distance from the state or even independence, which will only be successful if the international community recognizes this independence (Rosecrance & Stein 2006, 4). If the international community does not recognize this region, it will have severe consequences for its economy. Abkhazia and Transnistria are examples of a lack of recognition by the international community and a stalled economy. Moore argues that dissident actors do almost everything in their power to convince the sovereign state of its goals (Shellman & Moore 2003, 10):

Hostile state (dissident) actions include any public actions that meet at least one of these two criteria: (1) advance the state's (dissident's) goals at the expense of the dissident's (state's) goals or (2) degrade the dissident's (state's) ability to realize its goals.

The quote above explains the fact that dissident regions will try to ensure their goals at the expense of the sovereign state, on the other hand the sovereign state will also try to prevent the dissident region achieving its goals. According to Wielgohs and Pollack, there are also external factors that play a role in the rise and presence of dissident actors (Wielgohs & Pollack 2004, 41):

The level of fragmentation of the regime elites as well as the mobilization of the populations decisively influenced the mode of regime change and thereby defined the frame within which the opposition could act.

Dissident regions often rise because the cohesion and connection with the sovereign state and the central government is inadequate or absent. Abkhazia and Transnistria arose because the Georgian and Moldovan state were weak. Currently, according to IRI polls, the Georgian government is strong but the Moldovan government weak, which is represented by low government confidence (International Republican Institute 2017a). This low confidence in the Moldovan government is one of the reasons dissidence could rise in Gagauzia.

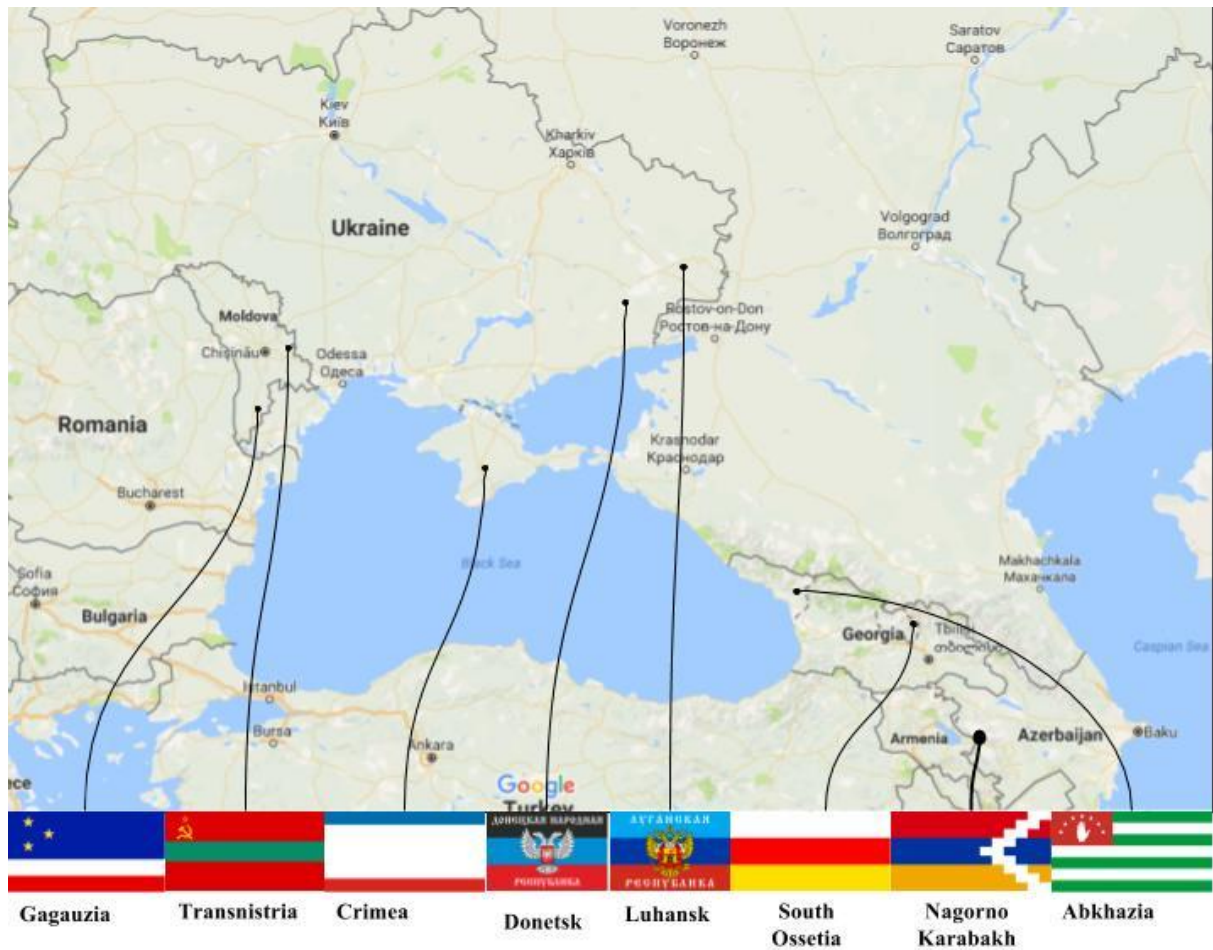


Figure 2. Location and names of the East European dissident region

3.3 The dissident regions

This paragraph places an emphasis on the recent history of the different dissident regions. It is important to provide a short overview on recent history since different elements of their dissidence are to be found here.

3.3.1 Abkhazia

Abkhazia, a region in western Georgia, proclaimed independence after a bloody war from 1992 to 1993. Abkhazia is a dissident region and only recognized by Russia, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru. The map below shows that Abkhazia shares a short border with Georgia and a longer border with Russia.



Figure 3. Map of Abkhazia (Mapsland 2017)

After the fall of the SU, the Abkhaz declared they wanted control over their own institutions within a Georgian confederation, a claim not heard by the Georgians who stated that Abkhazia had always been a part of Georgia. Therefore, a confederation was not necessary. This tone widened the distance between the Georgians and the Abkhaz. On April 9, 1991, Georgia, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, declared itself independent. Georgia promised Abkhazia and South Ossetia they would receive autonomy in the near future. Soon after the independence, the Georgian political elite, bolstered by nationalist feelings, saw both regions as a threat, and now that Georgia had loosened itself from the SU, it could determine what to do with these minorities. It withdrew Abkhaz and South Ossetian autonomy promises (Coppetiers 2004, 4-5).

The year 1991 came to an eruption when the Abkhaz parliament passed the resolution to restore the Abkhaz constitution of 1925, making it a sovereign republic (Coppetiers 2004, 4-5). The implementation of this resolution led to a full ground war between Georgia and Abkhazia, which started on August 14, 1992. The war resulted in (Zemskov-Züge 2015, 2):

- Abkhazia not receiving its independence
- A frozen conflict on Georgian soil
- Over a thousand people killed

- 240,000 internally displaced people
- 8000 heavily wounded people

That this conflict remains a status quo is mostly due to Russia, a state that initially fulfilled a role as peacekeeper. But this role eventually changed to guardian of an Abkhaz state. The situation between Georgia and Abkhazia did not change and became known as a frozen conflict. Between 2004 and 2008, the situation became tense again. Saakashvili tried to appease the situation by offering ‘special statuses in a potential federation’ to both dissident regions. This offer was rejected, and the status quo remained (American Progress 2011). At the same time, the relationship with Russia worsened due to Georgian rapprochement with NATO and close military cooperation with the US. In August 2008, Russia entered Georgian territory to protect Russian civilians in South Ossetia. During this war, the focus was mainly on South Ossetia, Abkhazia was saved at first instance. Though on August 10, Russian troops entered Abkhazia and continued their march up to Tbilisi. Two days later a ceasefire was signed, followed by Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (American Progress 2011).

Over the past years, the situation in Abkhazia remained roughly the same; an example of this is the large focus on Russia. This closer cooperation resulted in a large Russian military build-up in Abkhazia. Markedonov emphasizes that the current Abkhaz political elite is not focussed on Georgia, it is more concerned about the potential danger of the ethnical balance shift (American Progress 2011). This ethnical balance is disturbed by Abkhaz citizens whom easily obtain Russian citizenship due to the, later explained, passportization. Nowadays most Abkhaz have Russian passports which means that the Russian nationality is now leading in Abkhazia (American Progress 2011). The fear of a disturbed ethnical balance is also represented by polls that emphasize the people’s wishes. Figure 4 portrays the fluctuation (Shevchenko & Tekushev 2013).

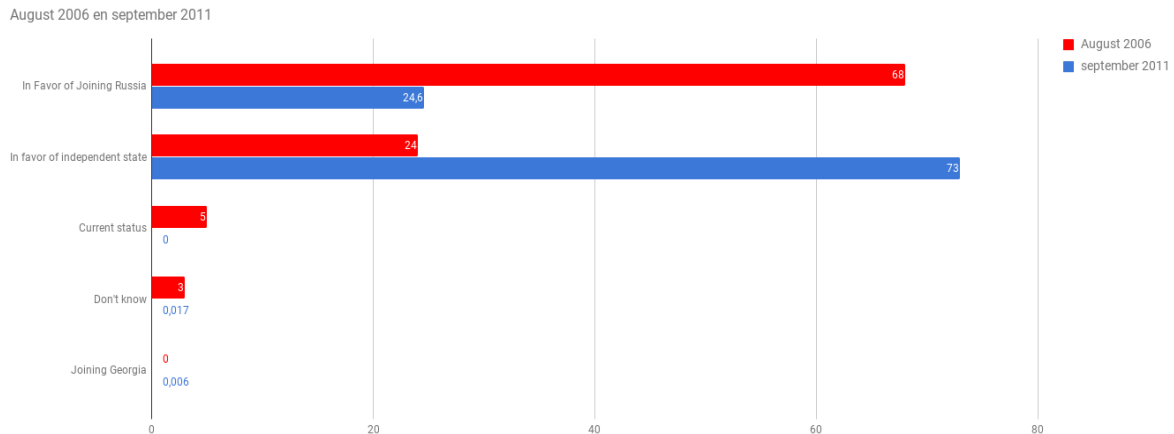


Figure 4. Poll indicating the opinions about the future of the Abkhaz state

In 2016, the Medium Orient Information Agency conducted a poll with similar results reflecting Markedonov’s information (Caucasus times 2016). The Abkhaz citizens are more focused on their own state than on joining Russia.

3.3.2 Transnistria

Transnistria, known as Pridnestrovia, is a dissident region in Eastern Moldova and one of two dissident regions on Moldova’s territory. The history of Transnistria is turbulent due to a violent conflict in the early ’90s. The first establishment of a Transnistrian entity was during the formation of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) in October 1924. During WWII, the region became part of a newly established Moldovan Republic as determined by the Soviets. The Soviet occupation was shortly paused by occupation of the Axis powers, their main concern was Romanian oil used for the Nazi regime during their invasion of the SU (Preda 2013, 326-329). The occupation lasted until February 1947 when the parties signed the treaty of Paris and restored the territories (Vahl & Emerson 2004, 3-4). This period was followed by Sovietization with iron fist, resulting in 500,000 Moldovans being deported. Since Soviet military constructions were located in Transnistria, different workers, from all corners of the SU, came to Transnistria for work. This transferred the region into a successful and wealthy industrial region, which made Sovietisation popular in Transnistria (Vahl & Emerson 2004, 3-4). The other side of the Dniester River (Moldova) remained rural, and so divergence between Transnistria and Moldova developed.

This divergence increase when the decay of the SU began. The decay influenced Moldova’s decisions; it became more nationalist. The Language Law, introduced on August

31, 1989, is an example of this increased nationalism. This law ensured Moldovan (Romanian), written in Latin, became the official state language. Russian became an unofficial language for interethnic communication (Vahl & Emerson 2004, 6). The law caused revolt in Transnistria; protests took place resulting in the Dniester Moldovan Republic proclaimed on September 2, 1990. The Transnistrian leaders argued their Russian speaking community was at danger and emphasized the Dniestrians were a separate ethnic community (Munteanu 2002, 212). The secession was broadly supported by the community, whom were widely anti-Moldovan/Romanian.

Soon, the situation escalated, and militants created the Transnistrian Republican Guard (Vahl & Emerson 2004, 8). Using violence, the Guard took over several public institutions. The Guard expected a serious answer from the Moldovan government, but once again, it became obvious that Transnistrian forces were strong and motivated and the Moldovan army badly equipped and trained (Vahl & Emerson 2004, 8).

The actual war took place from March 1992 until June 1992. In just four months, hundreds of people lost their lives (Vahl & Emerson 2004, 6-8). The war ended after the stationing of the Russian 14th army, who ended the intense fights around Bender (Moldovan side of the Dniester)² and drove the Moldovans out (Munteanu 2002, 216). A peace agreement was signed at July 21, in this agreement the parties agreed on a 10-km wide demilitarized zone and an emphasized on a possible special status for Transnistria within or outside the Moldovan Republic (Vahl & Emerson 2004, 10). The ceasefire also included the stationing of 6000 peacekeepers (Russian), of which 1500 are still present in Transnistria (Vahl & Emerson 2004, 10). The situation in Transnistria did not changed afterwards; different peace processes have taken place but none actually visibly contributed to conflict settlement. There are multiple reasons why conflict solutions failed, such as lack of willingness and Russian military presence.

Transnistria is strongly connected to Russia. For example, the 2006 referendum about its secession contained two questions: “Do you support the course of Transnistrian independence and joining the Russian Federation?” and “Do you favour the rejection of the independence of Transnistria and subsequent reunification with Moldova?” (Finley 2006).

² Bender is a city which lies on the Moldovan side of the Dniestr but still ‘belongs’ to the Transnistria de facto republic.

The results of this referendum were obvious: 94.6% voted against joining Moldova and 97.1% voted in favour of Transnistrian independence and joining the Russian Federation (Dembinska & Iglesias 2013, 423). The results show Russia has a major linkage with the region, which contributes to the fact that Russia is not interested in reunification or conflict settlement between Moldova and Transnistria. As long as the status quo remains, Russia influences an important piece of geopolitics in the south-eastern Europe, which might create instability and can affect the nations around (Sanchez 2009, 160).

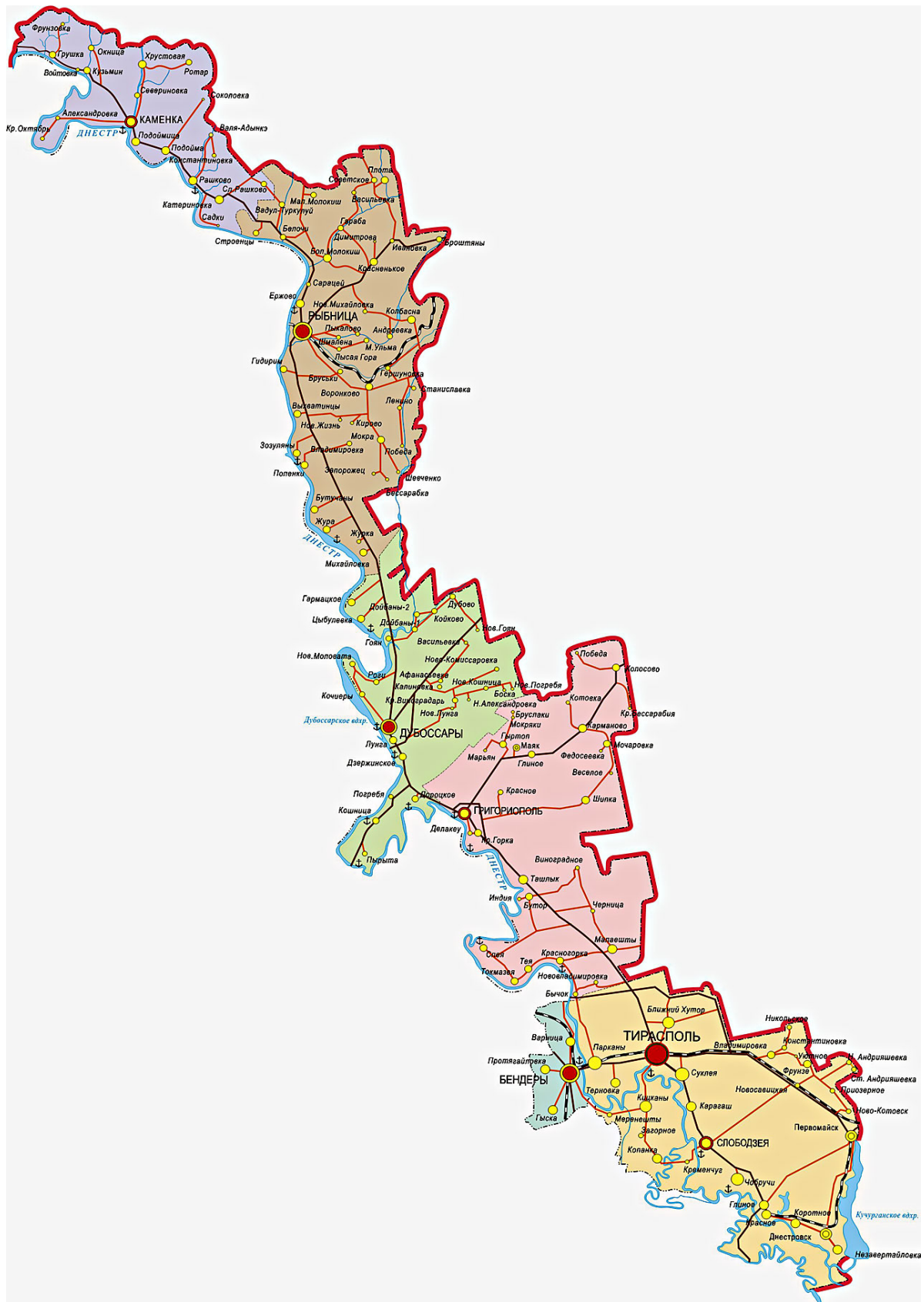


Figure 5. Map of Transnistria (Sdelano v Pridnestorvia 2014)



Figure 6. Map of Gagauzia (Gagauzia-Vin 2015)

3.3.3 Gagauzia

Gagauzia has a special autonomous status within Moldova. The 160,000 (4.5% of the complete Moldovan population) inhabitants of the autonomous entity are originally Turkish speaking with an Orthodox Christian religion (Calus 2014). These 4.5% possess 5% of the total Moldovan territory (Calus 2014). Although the origins of Gagauzia lay within the Turkish ethnic hemisphere, the political focus is Russian oriented (Calus 2014). Gagauz speak mostly Gagauz and Russian; most inhabitants do not speak Romanian, although this is the official Moldovan state language. It is obvious this language difference creates major problems, and a loss of connection with the rest of Moldova. Scholars like Popsoi, Calus, Haines, Roper, and Secrieru contributed to the current state of knowledge about this region, but as mentioned, Gagauzia is poorly covered by contemporary academic literature.

The economy of this small autonomous republic is characterized by problems and ineffectiveness because it had to deal with political tensions, as well as natural difficulties (Bulut 2016, 65). According to Bulut, there are three reasons for this weak performance (2016, 67):

- Importers and producers have no legal opportunities to create long-term contracts with companies abroad;
- The commercial services are limited;
- The lack of an independent service sector

The effects of these problems are represented in Table 2, which show Gagauzia's economic contribution is low.

Table 2. Average economic contribution per Moldovan region (Bulut 2016, 67)

Regional Range %	Industrial Production	Harvest of agricultural products	The main capital investment	Construction Sector	Freight Transportation	Passenger Transport	Retail sales	Paid services
Chisinau (the capital)	53,1	0,5	56,6	62,0	58,9	58,2	56,9	61,2
Northern Region	24,9	37,6	15,8	12,1	11,9	22,1	20,2	16,2
The Central Zone	15,7	18,8	16,8	15,7	25,1	12,4	13,8	12,9
Southern Region	3,5	32,0	8,9	8,7	3,4	6,4	6,2	6,7
Gagauz Autonomous Region	2,8	11,1	1,8	1,4	0,8	0,8	2,9	3,0
Pridnestrovy ¹²	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Republic of Moldova (the total amount)	19568	434828	12763,2	7106,2	4916,5	103,06	16891,8	9313,8

The overall conclusion is that the Gagauz economic situation is worrisome and unstable due to poor support of the central government.

The Moldova-Gagauzia issue started around the same period as the Transnistrian issue: after the introduction of the Moldovan language law³. During the 19th century, the Soviet domination issued special rights to Gagauz settlers, such as low taxes and no military service obligation. Therefore, Russian domination in Gagauzia was seen as acceptable. The period of Russification was followed by Romanisation, a hard and complete opposite domination for the Gagauz people. This made the Gagauz fondly remember the Russian rule and opposing Romanian domination (Chinn & Roper 1998, 89). During the last years of the SU, the MSSR received more space to implement its own policies (Chinn & Roper 1998, 90). One of these policies was to accentuate Moldovan culture and language, which resulted in alienation because Gagauz had little knowledge of the Moldovan language, as represented in Table 3.

Table 3. Language possession Gagauzia in 1998 (Chinn & Roper 1998, 91)

Russian	73%
Gagauz	91%
Moldovan	4%

³ This law ensured that Moldovan (Romanian) became the official state language written in Latin. Russian became an un-official language for interethnic communication

The Gagauz alienation resulted in dissatisfaction and indifference, which indirectly led the autonomy it has today. According to Chinn and Roper, the final push in this process of diversification was given by a Moldovan parliamentary report, which classified Gagauz civilians as an ethnic minority rather than indigenous people (1998, 92). Zabarrah, on the other hand, refers to the language law as reason for escalation of Moldova-Gagauz relations. The law made Moldovan the official state language and simultaneously acknowledged that its identity was connected with Romania. All the other languages, most importantly Russian, became secondary languages (Zabarrah 2012, 184). The reaction to these nationalist measures was a proclamation of the Gagauz Independent Republic in September 1989 (Roper 2001, 105). According to Chinn and Roper, the Gagauz were not in search of independence because they knew Gagauzia would not survive as a state. Their hidden aim was autonomy, an aim appealing to the Moldovan government. The central government noticed that the Gagauz province was poorly developed and completely alienated from the Moldovan state due to the Russification (Chinn & Roper 1998, 94). Therefore, the Moldovan government was willing to meet certain demands of the Gagauz Halki⁴.

Despite initial plans to safeguard autonomy, local Gagauz elections resulted in a strong nationalist Stepan Topal, chosen as Gagauz governor on December 1, 1991. Topal was more in favour of military actions, such as in Transnistria, resulting in the creation of Gagauz paramilitary formations, comparable to the Transnistrian Republican Guard, which attacked certain administrative offices, with casualties as a consequence (Chinn & Roper 1998, 96). Gagauzia was the first of both to declare its independence, but it was rather unsuccessful in pursuing it. While Transnistria actually used military means to ensure its independence, Gagauzia lacked economic and military capabilities to secure this. Compared with Transnistria, Gagauzia had no meaningful industries, it leaned on agriculture, and was dependent on Moldova's economic support (Roper 2001, 118). This made the region unattractive for (foreign) investors.

The negotiations between Moldova and Gagauzia led to an agreement in which Gagauzia gained a certain amount of autonomy. At the same time, the agreement had to be a precedent for Transnistria in the hope that, by offering autonomy, the region would also join Moldova (Chinn & Roper 1998, 96). Gagauz autonomy became official when the Moldovan

⁴ The Gagauz Halki is the Gagauz separatist movement

parliament approved the autonomy law on Gagauzia ('94 law). This law established recognition of Gagauzia as an autonomous republic, called the Gagauz Yeri⁵, and a special status concerning self-determination (Roper 2001, 96). The '94 law contains the important sentence: "Gagauzia is an autonomous territorial unit with a special status for self-determination of the Gagauz people." (Chinn & Roper 1998, 98)

In theory, Moldova recognizes the Gagauz people, culture, economy, and its political system. The Gagauz autonomy became a component of the Constitution of Moldova (Chinn & Roper 1998, 98). Article 1 (4) is another major paragraph referring to the powers of Gagauzia (Chinn & Roper 1998, 98): "In case of a change of the Republic of Moldova's status as an independent state, the Gagauz people have the right to external self-determination." This part of the law is essential because Gagauzia feared Moldova would join Romania one day, resulting in another Romanification and discrimination. Therefore, Gagauzia can declare its independence if Moldova unites with Romania.

Article 3 stresses the language issues; it recognizes three official languages for Gagauzia, namely Moldovan, Gagauz, and Russian, of which Moldovan and Russian are used as official public administrative languages (Chinn & Roper 1998, 98). Articles 7 and 14 describe the political situation in Gagauzia: the assembly is the designated Gagauz representative authority and is elected every four years with at least one deputy per locality (Chinn & Roper 1998, 99). The Baskan is the chief executive for four years and part of the Moldovan Cabinet lead by the President of Moldova (Chinn & Roper 1998, 99).

Over the years Moldova rapproached towards the EU. Not surprisingly, Gagauzia did not favour this path, and so Formuzal submitted the proposal for a consultative referendum on the direction of Moldova's foreign policy in October 2013 (Calus 2014, 4). The referendum was set for February 2, 2014 and questioned two issues, the foreign policy of Moldova and renewed emphasis on article 1 (4) of the '94 law. The results and questions of the referendum are presented in Table 4 (Severin & Shary 2014).

⁵ The Gagauz Yeri means land of the Gagauz

Table 4. Results and questions of the 2014 referendum in Gagauzia

Question	In favour	Against
<i>Одобряете ли вы курс на вступление в Европейский союз?</i> Do you approve of the policy of joining the European Union?	1718 votes 2.51 %	66,643 votes 97.49 %
<i>Одобряете ли вы курс на вступление в Таможенный союз?</i> Do you approve of the policy of joining the Customs Union?	68,182 votes 98.47 %	1057 votes 1.53 %
<i>Согласны ли вы принять проект закона "Об отложенном статусе народа Гагаузии на внешнее самоопределение" в случае, если Республика Молдова утратит статус независимого государства?"</i> Do you agree with accepting the following draft law: "The Gagauz government will adopt self-determination and declare itself independent in the case Moldova loses the status of an independent state"	68,023 votes 98.09 %	1324 votes 1.91 %

The turnout was above 70%, and no violations occurred. According to Formuzal, the referendum should be implemented in the following way (RadioFreeEurope 2014):

We do not want to suffer, we want free markets in both Europe and the Russian Federation. We, Gagauzians, a small minority, are telling the central government -- stop all processes of political integration with the EU- take care about economic integration. Who can guarantee that we will manage to jump on the last cart of the train speeding towards Europe and the EU will not end up like the Soviet Union?

The Governor's statement explains the results of the referendum. Gagauzia prefers to integrate into both the EAEU and the EU economically but not politically. According to Beyer and Wolff, the referendum showed the EU and pro-European policies have problems gain a foothold in the region. Beyer and Wolff indicate European representation and attention needs to be improved in order to move Gagauzia onto the European track (Beyer & Wolff 2016). Minzarari explains the referendum as ammunition for Russia since this country can use this popular will, the overwhelming results of the referendum, to tell the Moldovan government it should listen to the will of the people (Minzarari 2014). Additionally, Minzarari research explains the dilemma of the Moldovan government with regard to the crisis in Gagauzia (Minzarari 2014):

The Gagauz referendum and the consequent central authorities' inactivity may have forced the Moldovan government into a critical stalemate: it could face risky protests if it prevents further referendums, but it may also risk further protests if

the government allows such votes on Moldova's foreign policy orientation to accumulate.

Altogether the situation in Gagauzia remains unsolved and the region seems to be restless. In view of the quote above, neither Gagauzia nor Moldova will contribute actively to improve bilateral relations.

3.4 Moldova and the European Union

EU-Moldova relations originated in 1991, just after Moldova's independence. According to Danii and Mascauteanu, the relations between the EU and Moldova can be divided into three sections. The first section covers the period of Moldovan independence up to 1998. These seven years can be characterized by the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (Minzarari 2014), focussed on establishing a partnership and promoting trade, investment, and a harmonious economic relationship. The Agreement provided a basis for legislative, economic, financial, social, and cultural cooperation and developed the Moldovan economy into a market economy (European Union 1994). Due to lacking diplomatic capabilities, Moldova did not succeed in accelerating and deepening the negotiations with the EU towards possible membership (Danii & Mascauteanu 2011, 101). Furthermore, the internal Moldovan situation changed: the communist party regained power.

The second stage of EU-Moldova cooperation, from 1998 to 2005, is known for the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Stability Pact for Southeast Europe aimed to establish peace and security in Southeast Europe to prevent conflicts and ensure cooperation among the countries in the region. This led to comprehensive measures for long-term stabilization, security, democratization, and economic reconstruction (Bendiek 2004, 14).

Schmitke and Yekelchik described two main goals of the ENP. The first was establishing good relations with countries around the EU, focussed on common values in fields relating to law, good governance, human rights, and economy (EEAS 2008) and to create an area of security and stability (Schmidtke & Yekelchik 2008, 137). The second goal of the ENP focussed on promoting social and political change through financial aid, access to the EU market, and compliance with the standards of the EU. Crisis Group Europe emphasizes the ENP mainly focussed on integration concerning EU affairs: economy and

social structures, justice and home affairs, and the basic needs for an economy, such as transport, energy, and education. Additionally, the group also mentioned human rights, democracy, and Transnistria (EEAS 2004, 12):

Sustained efforts towards a settlement of the Transnistria conflict, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognised borders, and guaranteeing respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

As the Crisis Group describes, not a lot of progress has been made on these issues mainly due to lacking administrative capacity (International Crisis Group 2006, 14-15).

The third stage covers 2005 up to today and concerns the EaP initiative and the Association Agreement. The Copenhagen Criteria, the criteria for EU membership, remain central in this period (Danii & Mascauteanu 2011,102). The EaP is mainly focused on building democratic institutions, intensifying economic cooperation, and establishing closer ties with the six countries in Eastern Europe (Park 2014). The EaP intensified cooperation on human rights and good-governance and often criticized because it treats each country with the same policies, a one-size-fits-all model. Moreover, Moldova especially was willing to invest in the EaP but was deceived when costly reforms were asked but EU membership was not a prospect (Danii & Mascauteanu 2011,102).

The AA was the immediate cause for organizing a referendum in Gagauzia. Bulgari introduced a conception of the Association Agreement (2015, 41):

The Association Agreement (AA) is an economic and political tool applied by the EU in order to develop its foreign policy and commercial relations with the neighbouring countries and implemented by the later in order to prosper and cultivate the EU core values.

This definition explains the AA as an agreement to bring Moldova closer to the EU. However, unlike other agreements, the AA prescribed actual issued measures that need to be implemented. Along with the measures described, the market in Moldova should become more attractive for investors, leading to the “economic growth, jobs creation, prosperity and stability in the Republic of Moldova” (Bulgari 2014, 49).

The way to generate these benefits is by reforming and modernizing all government sectors and, most importantly, harmonizing the national legislation with the acquis

communautaire (Bulgari 2014, 49). According to Montesano, vander Togt and Zweers, the AA needs to be improved to achieve this (2016, 1):

In order to strengthen its profile and foster better implementation of the Association Agreement, the European Union (EU) needs to update its policies towards Moldova by means of a pragmatic mix of strict conditionality and strategic patience. While recent developments in the EU's approach offer room for optimism, Moldova's economic and political woes, coupled with the geopolitical sensitivity of the protracted Transnistrian conflict, require better investment and synergy of resources between the EU and its member states

This is not the only critique the AA received. Putin and Dodon, President of Moldova, gave a joint press conference, where both were negative towards the AA. Putin mentioned the following (Kremlin 2017):

There are certain risks for us, similar to the risks that we faced after a similar document was signed between Ukraine and the European Union. We said so openly and quite convincingly, I believe. We always said so to our partners in the CIS countries, and to our European partners. Much can and should be done in the trilateral format, of course, if our European friends and our partners (Moldova, I mean) are willing to do so

The newly elected president of Moldova, Dodon, agreed with Putin (Kremlin 2017):

I believe that the agreement has done Moldova no good. We have lost the Russian market and, strangely enough, our exports to the EU have also fallen. In other words, we have received nothing from signing the agreement

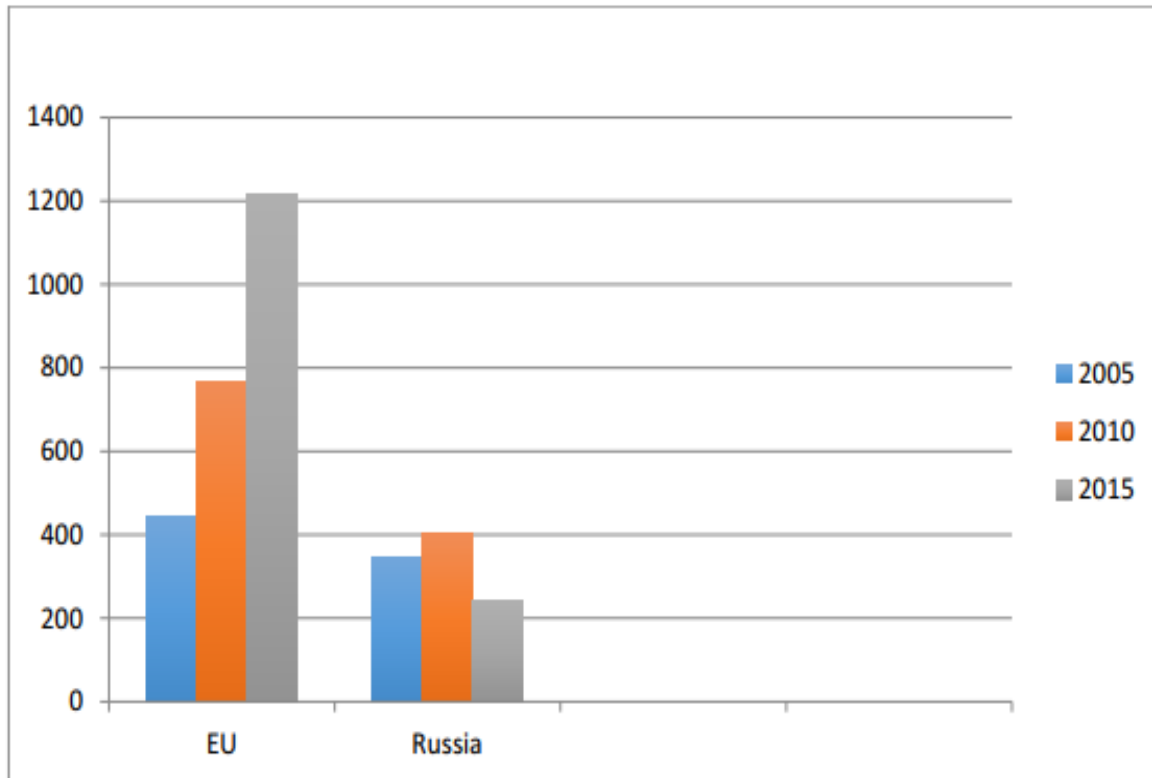


Figure 7. Share of Moldova's exports (Emerson & Cenusa 2017, 3)

It is not remarkable that Dodon used these words since he campaigned to seek alliance with Russia. Still, exports to Russia declined, and as Figure 9 shows, exports to the EU increased. Nevertheless, Dodon requested the observer status of the EAEU, which according to Emerson and Cenusa, is economic suicide. Because it creates uncertainty for investors, European investors will leave, which means a loss within Moldova's economy (Emerson & Cenusa 2017, 5-6). Furthermore, Scheffers emphasizes that Moldova should not forget it is the highest recipient of EU aid per capita after Palestine (Scheffers 2010, 296). Moldova joining the EAEU might have disastrous consequences for the signatory of the AA.



Figure 8. Moldova GDP annual growth rate (Trading Economics 2017)

3.5 Georgia and the European Union

The development of EU-Georgian relations are similar to those of Moldova and the EU; therefore, this paragraph will not dwell upon the years 1991 until 2008. This choice is strengthened by the fact that the policies during this period were not nation-state specific but aimed at a group of states; the intentions and effects were roughly the same.

In 2008, Georgia went through a difficult period: from August 7th till August 12th a war took place. This war occurred simultaneously with Georgia's negotiations for closer cooperation with NATO and the EU; at that time, Georgia was part of the EU ENP program and the overall public support asked for more rapprochement with both the EU and NATO. The EU had no obligations to choose a position in this war, and so it remained vague regarding the events in Georgia. It was up to the member states individually to comment on the situation. Both France and Germany agreed the EU should be the "honest broker" in this conflict (Valasek 2008, 1). Other member states, such as Poland and Sweden, were more critical on Russian behavior; Slovakia, on the other hand, pointed the finger at Georgia (Valasek 2008, 1). This dividedness represents the position of the EU: it remained neutral because its member states could not agree how to act nor which side to choose. During the war and the period afterwards, the EU remained at the background; the only member state that involved itself was France, mostly as an intermediate power aiming to restore peace in the region. As Khidasheli and Valasek point out, Georgia engaged in many actions to help the EU, such as hosting a pipeline to ensure European energy needs, supporting EU member

states during the wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan, being loyal concerning EU policy implementation, and willing to undertake military and economic reforms in order to possibly join the alignments EU and NATO (Valasek 2008, 2). However, after the war, it became clear to Georgia that its support for both alignments was of little value, which created disappointment among the Georgian government and, above all, at the Georgian society. In their eyes, they heavily supported EU and NATO, unfortunately this was not rewarded during the war resulting into frustration and a loss of confidence in the actual power of both alliances to counter Russian aggression (Khidasheli 2011, 101).

Still, close cooperation between Georgia and the EU remained, and after three years of silence, an announcement was made: Georgia and the EU started negotiations for the AA, one of the most important agreements in EU integration with non-member states. The main aim of the AA was to improve Georgia's economic policies. Like Moldova, Georgia also deals with dissident regions on its territory, which are hardly considered in the AA. To illustrate, Abkhazia is just mentioned twice (European Council 2014, 5):

RECOGNISING the importance of the commitment of Georgia to reconciliation and its efforts to restore its territorial integrity and full and effective control over Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhnavali region/South Ossetia in pursuit of a peaceful and lasting conflict resolution based on principles of international law, and of the EU's commitment to support a peaceful and lasting resolution of the conflict

Thus, the EU recognizes troubles in Georgia's Western and Northern regions but does not give a conclusive solution to these regions' problems, which is remarkable because the AA is known for its clear and decisive language, often providing directly implementable solutions, recommendations, and adjustments. The AA also mentions its policies are not applicable to Abkhaz territory since Georgia does not have effective control over the region (European Council 2014, 139). The relations with Abkhazia continued to be under pressure, especially after Russia signed an alliance and strategic partnership with Abkhazia at the same period as the AA (Farchy 2014). This agreement meant more military and economic support for Abkhaz, resulting in a worried and an angry response by Georgia.

4. Analysis

Table 5. Answers and questions concerning the determination of influence

Question	Abkhazia - Georgia	Transnistria - Moldova	Gagauzia - Moldova
Does the EU recognize this dissident region?	X	X	✓
Did the sovereign state reduced its cooperation with the EU?	X	X	X
Did the public opinion within the region, towards the EU, change over the past five years?	X	X	✓
Did the public opinion within the sovereign state, toward the EU, change over the past five years?	X	✓	✓
Do the dissident regions benefit from closer cooperation between the sovereign state and the EU?	X	✓	✓
Is EU rapprochement the only reason for the region's dissidence?	X	X	X
Is there a third party that could influence the relationship between the dissident region and the EU?	✓	✓	✓
Did this region organize events to sabotage EU rapprochement?	X	X	✓
Did the relations between the sovereign state and the dissident region changed over the past five years?	✓	X	✓
Is the region mentioned as an obstacle in the AA?	X	X	X
Does the EU see these dissident regions as a problem for accession?	X	X	X
Do these dissident regions influence the rapprochement of Moldova to the European Union?	X	X	X

This chapter includes the analysis of the three dissident regions with regard to their influence on EU rapprochement. The analysis is combined with an overview of answers from interviews with experts and related persons. As mentioned in the second chapter, Gagauzia is the main case of this thesis. To gain a broader picture of this region, I visited Moldova and interviewed people dealing with Gagauzia in their daily work and life. Every interviewee was asked the same questions. The most important answers are outlined in this section.

Both Transnistria and Abkhazia function control cases. The research question remains central in this analysis: Do the dissident regions Abkhazia, Gagauzia, and Transnistria influence the rapprochement of their sovereign state towards the European Union? Abkhazia and Transnistria are both discussed in many academic sources and journals. Gagauzia, on the other hand, is fairly unknown and not covered very well in academic literature.

This analysis was based on a model where questions are answered to determine whether influence of the dissident region exists or not. The questions were answered with yes

(✓) or no (X). The 11 questions per region clarify whether there is influence. In Table 5, the model is displayed.

4.1. Does the EU recognize the dissident region?

As the model indicates, Abkhazia and Transnistria are not recognized by their sovereign state due to their violent secession in the early '90s. The EU has a non-recognition policy towards both dissident regions, which suggests that both belong to their sovereign state and peace should be restored (Fisher 2010):

The EU Non-Recognition and Engagement Policy (NREP) aims at opening a political and legal space in which the EU can interact with the separatist regions without compromising its adherence to Georgia's territorial integrity.

This citation refers to the actual situation in Georgia but also in Moldova, the EU can interact with both regions but always without ensuring that the relations between the sovereign state and the EU are not damaged. Examples of these interactions are: de-isolations by seeking contact with the population and trustbuilding in order to increase leverage of the EU (Fisher 2010). An example of specific measure of interaction could be granting visas to a number of inhabitants of the dissident region (Fisher 2010). All in all the EU will never damage its diplomatic relations by recognizing the dissident regions of both Georgia and Moldova as sovereign states.

Concerning Gagauzia, the facts are different. Gagauzia is recognized by the EU as an autonomous territorial unit within Moldova, regrettably this autonomy is poorly implemented by Moldova. The EU noticed Gagauzia became unstable during 2013 and 2014. In order to ensure that Gagauzia's does not become as alienated as Transnistria and Abkhazia it addressed Moldova to respect the autonomy of Gagauzia (Vlah 2017) (Pistrinciuc 2017). The EU stressed Moldova to respect the autonomy of Gagauzia the following way (European Union 2017):

We reiterate our commitment to strengthening the status of Gagauzia as an autonomous territorial unit. In this context, we call for the adoption of the amendments proposed by the Permanent Working Group on Co-operation between the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the People's Assembly of Gagauzia so that the 1994 Law on the Special Legal Autonomous Status of Gagauzia can be applied.

Table 6. Does the EU treat Gagauzia properly?

Anghelov	Sirkeli	Vlah
Yes. The industry of Gagauzia is funded by EU money, besides this the EU helps Gagauzia in combatting corruption	Yes. Its current soft power to Gagauzia works. This is a result of the referendum.	Yes. Currently, the EU provides us with much support. They invested 6.5 million euros, and in a short while, we will receive another five million. The reason is to motivate local young people to open companies.

Besides pointing Moldova on respecting the autonomy of Gagauzia it also increased attention towards the region, recognized by all interviewees (Table 6). This increased attention is soft power, which are essentially financial resources. If the EU donates financial resources to the region, projects will originate, leading to increased visibility of the EU in Gagauzia. As Vitalli Vlah mentions, after the referendum in 2014, Gagauzia received 6.5 million euros, and another five million euros will follow soon. Through this visibility, the EU receives more public support in Gagauzia. In the opinion polls conducted by Pilgrim Demo it became clear that support for the EU increased, now 12% of the population sees the EU as the actor which helps Gagauzia the most (Pilgrim Demo 2017). Over the past years this number was always much lower. Most interviewees also indicated that increased attention of the EU towards Gagauzia is a result of the referendum and skirmishes during 2013 and 2014.

4.2 Did the sovereign state reduced its cooperation with the EU?

This second subquestion is important to ask since the answer will provide a better understanding of the real influence of dissident regions on EU rapprochement. It is quite clear that over the past years both Georgia and Moldova further increased their cooperation with the EU. The AA is the most important example of this increased cooperation. The signing of the AA can be seen as a great adaption to EU policies and structures. In addition to the AA, both states normally aim to increase cooperation. In the current period (2017-2020) cooperation between Moldova and Georgia will further increase due to the implementation of the DCFTA. This increased program, the Single Support Framework, will provide financial support and EU assistance on the following issues (EEAS 2017):

1. Economic development
2. Governance
3. Connectivity
4. Contacts between people

Although the EU and Moldova increased cooperation, the current focus of the Moldovan government shifted from the EU to the EAEU, as can be read from the fact that Dodon asked for an observer status at the EAEU. According to earlier mentioned scholars this might result in an economic loss, investor pull out, instability, and most of all, an incomplete economic transition. Moldova is in the middle of a transition within the DCFTA. If it drastically stops the reforms, Moldova will be saddled with a partly reformed economic system. This will certainly not improve the economic situation of Moldova.

When it comes to Georgia, as mentioned, the cooperation between both actors did not decrease. On the contrary, cooperation between both increased rapidly. One of the examples is the visa liberalization for Georgian citizens in March 2017 but also the recent agreed increased cooperation in which both actors agreed on a financial allocation, between €371-€453 million, in order to support Georgia's technical and financial reforms. The difference between Moldova and Georgia is that the latter purely focusses on the EU and has no relations with the EAEU. An important similarity is their increased cooperation with the EU.

4.3 Did the public opinion within this region towards the EU change over the past five years?

As table 5 indicates, the public opinion towards the EU changed only in Gagauzia. Within Abkhazia and Transnistria, public opinion remained unchanged; both regions solely focus on their main political partner, Russia. The prominent reason for the poor relations between the dissident regions and the EU is the non-recognition policy by the EU member states.

4.3.1 EU - Transnistria

Officially, the EU does not recognize, and does not have diplomatic relations, with Transnistria. Over the past years, some back channel diplomatic relations evolved due to conflict settlements, such as the Kozak Memorandum in which the EU played its part (Popescu 2006). Currently, the EU policies with regard to Transnistria concern reunification as to be derived from official documents (Racz 2016, 19):

Peaceful re-unification with Transnistria is possible via the gradual, step-by-step transformation of the separatist region, as well as via making Moldova more attractive to the population of the separatist region.

EU officials see the Transnistrian conflict as solvable because currently violence is absent in this status-quo which enlarges to opportunities restore peace since violence will not be a game changer. To contribute to a solution, the EU (Racz 2016, 19):

- Assists in bilateral (Moldova-Transnistria) meetings
- Supports confidence building
- Is an important actor in the 5+2 peace dialogue
- Increases safety due to the EUBAM mission
- Points out that Transnistria violates human rights very often

Although Transnistria and the EU do not have negligible diplomatic relations, Transnistria still largely depends on EU trade; 70% of Transnistrian exports are absorbed by EU member states (De Waal 2016). Still, public opinion is against the EU mainly due to the extensive Russian media coverage.

The EU and Moldova do not have a clear plan on how to solve the Transnistrian conflict. According to Popescu and Litra, the EU most likely tries to influence the situation by reviving policies on Moldova, such as visa free travel, freedom and prosperity, and free trade. This should make Moldova wealthier and more attractive for Transnistrian citizens, which should temper Transnistrian-Russian accession feelings (Popescu & Litra 2012, 4). Eventually it should be understood that the EU is the better option. According to Calus, there is no real evidence for a solution to this conflict because of the contradictory interests of both parties, the absence of internal pressure and the lack of interest within Transnistria (Calus 2016, 81).

4.3.2 EU - Abkhazia

Recently, the EU stressed its position concerning Abkhazia once again (EEAS 2017): [The EU] supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, as recognized by International Law. The European Union does not recognize the constitutional and legal framework in which these (Abkhaz) elections have taken place.

This statement explains that the EU has absolutely no interest in recognizing the proclaimed Abkhaz independence and its political activities. This stance against Abkhazia originates from close EU-Georgia relations, which ensure a solid non-recognition position towards Abkhazia

(Clamadiou 2017). The EU sees Abkhazia as Russian occupied territory and urges Russia to reverse the recognition of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia (European Parliament 2011).

Most Abkhaz see the EU as an ally of Georgia, focussed on restoring original borders. The Abkhaz public opinion does not concern restoring borders with Georgia, and so the Abkhaz believe the EU should stop trying to achieve this (Kvarchelia 2012, 7-8). The EU is seen as an organisation that does not respect Abkhaz independence, and therefore, Abkhazia remains hesitant with regard to cooperation with the EU as emphasized by a respondent of an EU-Abkhazia perceptions research (Kvarchelia 2012, 7-8): “Let them recognise us first. We are not going to be fooled by their ‘economic carrots’”.

Relations between Abkhazia and the EU remain underdeveloped because of the non-recognition policy. As long as the sovereign nation does not support the dissidents’ demands, the EU will not support them either. Abkhazia, on the other side, sees rapprochement with the EU as a risk because it might result in losing its proclaimed independence.

4.3.3 EU-Gagauzia

Like Transnistria, Gagauzia’s geopolitical worldview has predominately a Russian focus, e.g. language and politics, which results in Gagauz citizens rejecting the EU and approving the EAEU. Although the Gagauz population voted against joining the EU, former Governor of Gagauzia, Mihail Formuzal, emphasized there was no general disapproval of European integration (European Economic and Social Committee 2014):

The Gagauz population is not against European integration, but demands respect for autonomy, a fairer distribution of resources, including EU funds, a greater commitment to the fight against corruption in the country.

The EU’s policies towards Gagauzia are different from the ones focused on Transnistria, simply because Gagauzia is not a region that proclaimed its independence illegally. However, it can be seen as a dissident region because of its referendum, its anti-Moldova behavior, and the difference in cultural aspects, such as language and cultural practices. Where the EU stressed Abkhazia and Transnistria to respect and restore the sovereignty of both Georgia and Moldova, it pressured Moldova to respect the autonomy of Gagauzia (European Union 2017):

We reiterate our commitment to strengthening the status of Gagauzia as an autonomous territorial unit. In this context, we call for the adoption of the amendments proposed by the Permanent Working Group on Co-operation between the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the People's Assembly of Gagauzia so that the 1994 Law on the Special Legal Autonomous Status of Gagauzia can be applied.

This was not the first time the EU issued an admonishment. On March 8, 2017, the European Commission emphasized that the AA would only work if it respected certain points regarding minorities, such as implementing the '94 law (EEAS 2017).

Both EU statements show the EU acknowledges the seriousness of the situation. As mentioned, Gagauzia organised a referendum where people were asked whether they would like Moldova to join the EU or the EAEU. The people of Gagauzia largely supported joining the EAEU. During the referendum in March 2014, support for the EU received only 2% of the votes; instead, people largely voted in favour of the EAEU. The EU started to pay more attention to Gagauzia after this referendum, by means of investments and different social and economic projects (Vlah 2017). This resulted in increased popular support for the EU (Pilgrim Demo 2017): now, almost 12% of the Gagauz population see the EU as the important actor in Gagauzia. As the political officers of the EEAS and CEPS and Mihail Sirkeli indicate, the referendum influenced EU policies because it increased attention to Gagauzia (Vlah, 2017) (Sirkeli 2017) (Interviewee 6 2017). The EU certainly wants to prevent Gagauzia becoming another conflict zone, and therefore, it invests in the region. However, both statements were released after the events in 2014. So it can be concluded that the EU learned from ignoring dissident regions since they might create problems in the future. The EU, therefore, warned Moldova to respect the autonomy of Gagauzia.

4.4 Did the public opinion within the sovereign state, towards the EU, change over the past five years?

4.4.1 Moldova

Figure 7 elaborates the current Moldovan thoughts about the EU and indicates the opinion on joining the EU is shared by 49% of the Moldovan population. The positive perspectives towards the EU shifted intensively over the years and are currently characterized by tough times. Figure 10 indicates support for the EU is drastically declining. The public

support for joining the EU was around 75% in 2007 but around 49% in October 2017, a decline of 26% over 10 years, besides this it has to be mentioned that the support was even lower two years ago. This decline in support comes along with the intensification of the relations between the EU and Moldova. Intensification does not immediately mean increased support, on the contrary, the fact that support in Moldova remains low has a lot to do with the fact that the EU can not fulfill the expectations of the people.

If Moldova could only join one international economic union, which one should it be?

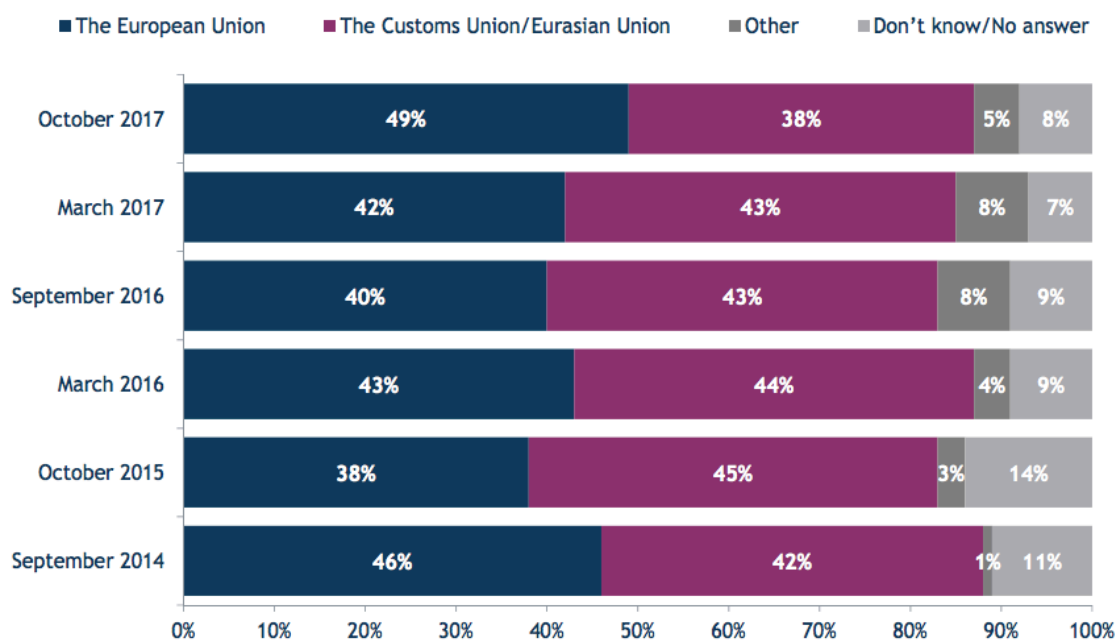


Figure 9. Opinion poll results 2014-2017 concerning Moldova's economic alignment (International Republican Institute 2017a)

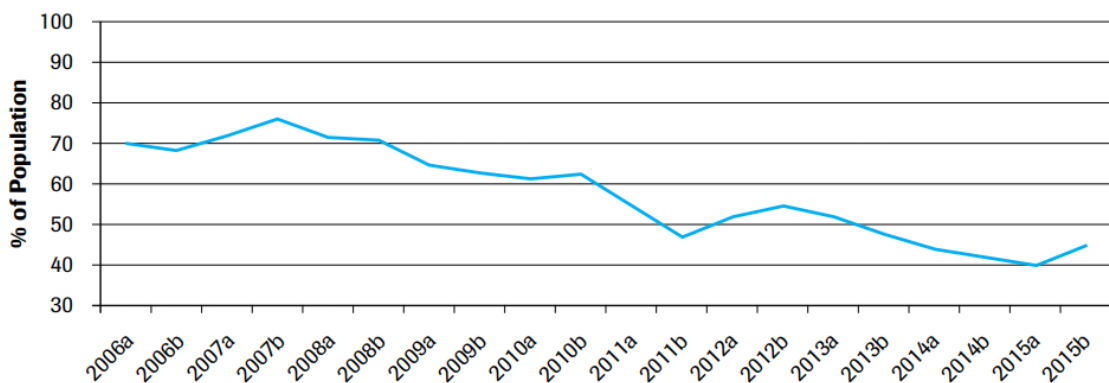


Figure 10. Public support in Moldova for joining the European Union (Montesano et al. 2016, 15)

These expectations have to do with direct solutions to e.g. corruption, poverty, low income and unemployment. People expected that closer alignment with the EU would solve these problems and that prosperity would follow automatically. Of course these expectations were high, too high. But still, according to a part of the parliamentarians and the inhabitants, the EU was to blame for ongoing internal struggles (Cenusa 2015). Furthermore, the overall trust in politicians is low and still decreasing, which is partly a result of the absence of the economic prosperity promised by the pro-EU politicians and EU officials. Besides the lack of fulfilling expectations the Pro-EU party is associated with multiple scandals, of which stealing one billion euros was the negative peak (Whewell 2015).

Do you support Georgia joining the European Union (EU)?

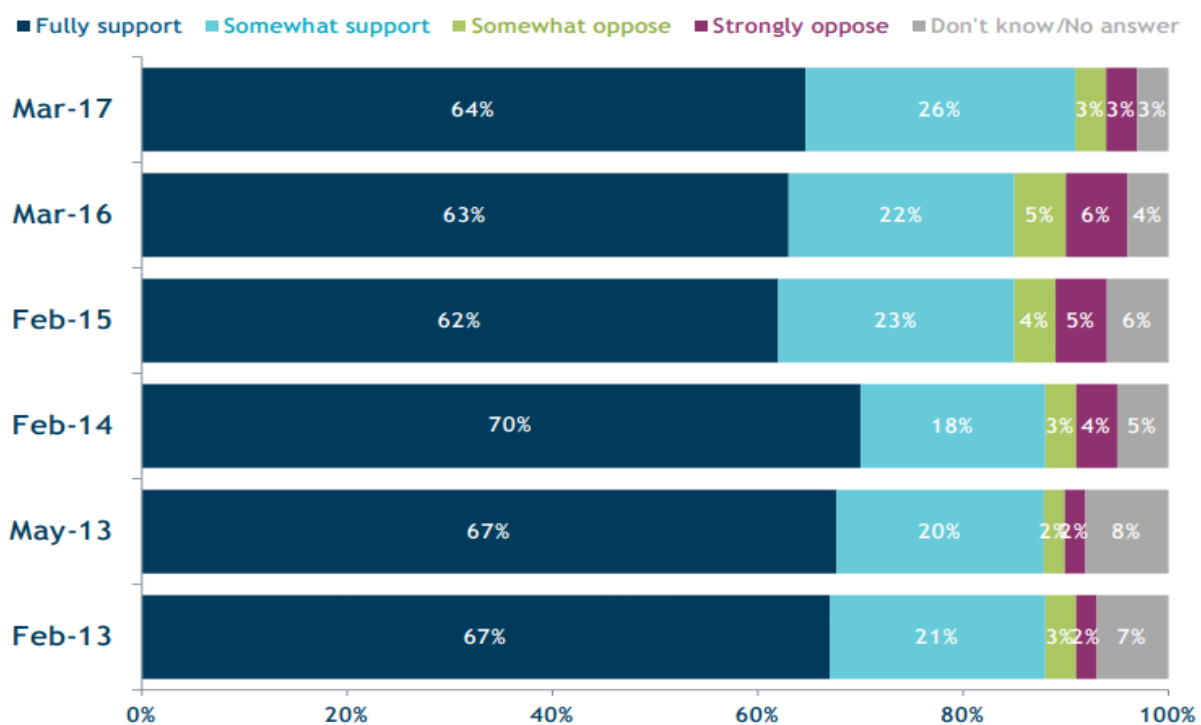


Figure 11. Georgia's EU support for the years 2013-2017 (International Republican Institute 2017b)

4.4.2 Georgia

The results of the March 2017 opinion poll are displayed in Figure 11, below, and show large support for the EU. Unlike Moldova, Georgia's support for the EU is stable and fluctuates around the 67% (Litra & Chkhikvadze 2016, 7). The public opinion in Georgia towards the EU remained relatively high and stable, mainly due to a prospering economy, stable internal situation and the lack of an alternative since Georgia has poor relations with Russia. The numbers concerning EU support remained more or less equal. In comparison with Moldova, Georgia goes through a stable and prosperous period, the economy grew and number

concerning corruption decreased. Next to this the current and former governments were able to tackle internal issues as corruption, pensions and unemployment successfully. Also the installation of the visa liberalization was welcomed profoundly and contributed to more support for the EU (Civil Georgia 2017). To conclude support for the EU in Georgia remained stable, in Moldova the support declined.

4.5 Do the dissident regions benefit from closer cooperation between the sovereign state and the EU?

As determined in table 5 and to be explained in this paragraph, Abkhazia does not benefit from closer cooperation between Georgia and the EU. The most obvious reason for this conclusion is the fact that EU explicitly mentioned that its policies do not cover the territory of Abkhazia (European Union 2014):

The application of this Agreement, or of Title IV (Trade and Trade-related Matters) thereof, in relation to Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia over which the Government of Georgia does not exercise effective control, shall commence once Georgia ensures the full implementation and enforcement of this Agreement, or of Title IV (Trade and Trade-related Matters) thereof, respectively, on its entire territory.

Besides the fact that the EU explicitly mentions the exclusion of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as long as Georgia has no effective control, there are no further relations between Abkhazia and the EU. Not like Transnistria or Gagauzia, Abkhazia is virtually excluded from the rest of the world except for Russia. The fact that Russia and Abkhazia share borders make that both can trade easily with each other. Through this way Abkhazia is not dependent on trade through Georgia, like Transnistria experiences with Moldova.

Both Transnistria and Gagauzia did benefit from Moldova signing the AA. After the signature, Gagauzia received an increase in funds, allowing the community of Comrat to build an industrial complex just outside the city centre (Anghelov 2017). Besides this industrial complex the EU made funds available for Gagauzia to stimulate the younger generation in opening new businesses in order to generate economic growth and prosperity in Gagauzia (Anghelov 2017). These mentioned examples are recently introduced, according to most interviewees this has to do with the fact that the EU just recently acknowledged the

importance of increase attention to this region (Interviewee 4 2017). This acknowledged importance is a result of the concerns with regard to the situation in Gagauzia around 2013/2014.

As with Abkhazia, the AA is not applicable on Transnistrian territory as written down in article 462 of the AA (European Union 2014). The main difference between Abkhazia and Transnistria are the neighboring states which Transnistria borders namely Moldova and Ukraine, two countries with a strong EU connection. Russia is not a neighboring country and so direct trade with Russia remains hard. Transnistria is therefore forced to do business through Moldova or Ukraine. Most Transnistrian businesses are registered within Moldova, this enables the Transnistrian businesses to trade within Transnistria and Moldova but also to other nations (EUBAM 2015). Most Transnistrian companies benefited from the AA because, as mentioned, they are registered at the Moldovan entities and so they fall under the rules and instructions written down in the AA. Since the application of the AA Moldova's economy lightly grew and so also the registered Transnistrian companies. The EU contains a huge part of the Transnistrian economical market: 70% of its exports go to EU member states (Waal 2016).

4.6 Is EU rapprochement the only reason for the region's dissidence?

EU rapprochement is often not the primary reasons for regions' dissidence. The reason for both Abkhazia's and Transnistria's dissidence is the disagreement about the political direction of the former Soviet republics in the early '90s. As mentioned in paragraph 3.3.2, the Transnistrian leadership did not want to be part of a state in which Moldovan became the only state language and where Russian, the language spoken in Transnistria, became a secondary language. A large part of the Transnistrian community felt connected to the former Soviet, or contemporary Russian, community. This desire for being part of the Russian community and not being part of the Moldovan community, is the primary reason for Transnistrian dissidence. The EU rapprochement of Moldova is just an amplifier, it gives Transnistria only more reasons not to be part of the Moldovan Republic.

The situation of Transnistria is similar to the Abkhaz one. When the SU dissolved Abkhazia became part of Georgia, the newly founded government promised autonomy to Abkhazia. Soon it became clear for the Abkhaz that this autonomy was not a real option. The Abkhaz saw Georgian nationalism as a threat for their culture and language and so they tried

to secede. As with Transnistria, EU rapprochement is just an amplifier but not the primary reason for its dissidence.

Table 8. How would you describe the current relationship between the Moldovan government and Gagauzia?

Vlah	Interviewee 6	Interviewee 5
Normal. We want to remain within Moldova, but we watch Moldova closely. When we want to achieve something, troubles might occur because they do not expect us to do something.	Currently, the relations are much better. During the time of referendum, the government was in crises. Moldova had no interest in Gagauzia because they wanted to remain in power in the overall government.	Gagauzia is officially autonomous, but it is often ignored and not taken into consideration when making policy. Gagauzia is seen as the irritating factor.

Gagauz dissidence originated similarly with the Transnistrian and Abkhaz dissidence but the Gagauz dissidence at that time seemed to be solved with a far reaching autonomy for the region in 1994. The current dissidence of Gagauzia is mostly concerned with the non-implementation of this autonomy. Its current dissidence is strengthened by poor relations with the Moldovan government resulting in disadvantages and discrimination when it comes to language, ethnicity and budget distribution (de Waal 2016). All interviewees described the relation between Gagauzia and Moldova as stable but most completed the answer with a caveat.

Table 9. What are Gagauzia’s major internal problems?

Interviewee 4	Interviewee 6	Pistrinciuc	Sirkeli
Lack of EU knowledge. Lack of implemented autonomy. No EU related television.	Budget dividing Russian interference in Gagauzia Russian focussed media.	It’s not implemented autonomy. Poor dialogue with central government.	100% dependency on Russian media. People do not get a balanced information service at this moment. No interest in primary concerns but just geopolitics.

The question concerning Gagauzia’s major internal problems make a few leitmotifs clear (Table 9). At first, the Gagauz feel disadvantaged with regard to their ethnicity, implementation of their autonomy and receiving a fair share of the annual budget. The first and the last points are specifically important. Currently the autonomy is not implemented in any way, completely against what both parties agreed upon in the peace agreement of 1994. People feel betrayed because they gave up violence and their independence-ideals for this autonomy. All interviewees indicate that this autonomy is in any way not implemented and so

just a farce. Additionally, the Gagauz receive less money from the state budget than they should according to their population-size. Without the correct investments by the Moldovan government a large part of the population will remain poor and certainly politically unsatisfied. The third internal problem is the Russification, the Gagauz do not associate themselves with the EU and solely focus on Russia. Besides this the Gagauz do not get a fair and clear image of the EU since all media coverage is Russian oriented. Since Moldova is associated with the EU, and Gagauzia linked with Russia, a wedge between the two parties is created. Currently, relations are not under significant pressure, but all recognized that Moldova does not consider Gagauzia in its decision-making.

The mentioned internal problems contribute to its dissidence and form the primary reasons for this dissidence. According to my findings, strengthened by the opinion of the interviewees, the referendum was a cry for attention (Anghelov 2017). EU rapprochement cannot be seen as a primary reason for its dissidence. Gagauzia, still not pro-EU, used the moment to express dissatisfaction about its poor situation. The CEPS analyst (interviewee 6) cites Gagauzia is subordinated, nevertheless relations improved due to the referendum which functioned as a wakeup call.

4.7 Is there a third party that could influence the relationship between the dissident region and the EU?

During this thesis another actor, besides the EU, Georgia or Moldova, was mentioned very often: the Russian Federation. All three dissident regions have good relations with Russia, most of the inhabitants nostalgically look back to the SU and in their contemporary politics, Russia still plays an important role as their patron or idealist motherland. Therefore Russia can be seen as a third party that influences the relationship between the dissident region and the EU.

4.7.1 Russia - Abkhazia

Many scholars, like Gerrits and Bader, have emphasized an additional point to Russian-Abkhaz relations: Abkhazia, as well as South Ossetia, Nagorno Karabakh, and Transnistria, are vital for Russia's geopolitical hemisphere (Gerrits & Bader 2016, 300). These dissident regions are dependent on Russia with regard to economy, culture, and

politics. Russia is the only nation with whom they have economic relations, and therefore, they do not just earn their money by cooperation with Russia, their political worldview is completely Russified (Gerrits & Bader 2016, 300). Conversely, the regions are important because, through these regions, Russia can influence the sovereign states. As long as they have a dissident region on their territory, it will remain difficult to align internationally with the EU or NATO, as explained by Bugajski (2012, 6):

Moscow's optimum objective is to neutralize Georgia, eliminate American influence, prevent any opening of Western military bases, curtail support for energy projects independent of Russia, and bring the entire South Caucasus more tightly under the Russian umbrella.

According to Tsereteli, the internal conflicts influence Georgia's current foreign policies mainly because of the Russian military presence in both dissident regions (Tsereteli 2013, 231). According to Tsereteli, Georgia must normalize its relations with Russia. Tsereteli advises the following concerning Georgia (2013, 231):

Georgia should not abandon its policies calling for the de-occupation of the Georgian territories, non-recognition of the separatist areas, and integration with NATO and the E.U. None of these policies preclude Russia from opening its market for Georgian products, nor do they presage more Russian military involvement in Georgia.

If Georgia improves its relations with Russia, declining tensions between both will create chances to integrate further into the European and transatlantic world. If it does not, Abkhazia and South Ossetia will influence Georgia's internal and foreign policies.

4.7.2 Russia - Transnistria

As mentioned, 1500 "peacekeepers" of the Russian 14th army are stationed on Transnistrian soil, making it a sensitive issue for geopolitics. Wolff mentions three options for the territorial status of Transnistria with regard to Russia. First, muddling through, the current situation remains (2011, 865-866). The second is implementing parts of the peace settlements; one of the settlements is strong autonomy (Wolff 2011, 865-866). The last is the creation of a federation comparable to the United Kingdom or Denmark (Wolff 2011, 865-866). As mentioned, Russia will play an important role in conflict settlement. To maintain influence,

Russia will keep its “peacekeepers” or military personnel in regions like Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia to (Gerrits & Bader 2016, 229-230), according to Sanchez, counter the influence of the US and NATO (2009, 172). Beyer and Wolff mention the conflict between Moldova and Transnistria is stuck because all actors have completely opposing interests. Furthermore, Moldovan weaknesses, such as: decline in economic capabilities, internal unrest, corruption, and a diffused political system, make it hard for Moldova to strongly counter the dissidence of Transnistria. Moldova seems handicapped with these problems (Beyer & Wolff 2016, 349).

4.7.3 Russia - Gagauzia

For a long time Russia remained reluctant with regard to Gagauzia, the relations between Gagauzia and Russia were diplomatically and economically underdeveloped. Russia lacked interest in Gagauzia because it was not of significant geopolitical importance to Russia (Chinn & Roper 1998, 97). The Russian reluctance also influenced the negotiations between Gagauzia and Moldova at the first years of the nineties. Moldova’s position was stronger in Gagauzia because here it did not fear any Russian involvement, as was the case in Transnistria.

In the years afterwards the situation Russian interest grew and both were looking for political en economical rapprochement. In 2013 and 2014, both Moldova and Gagauzia were on rampage. At that time, about 100 Gagauz went to Russia for paramilitary training in Moscow (Secieru 2014, 5). At the same time, relations between Russia and Gagauzia intensified with fortified contacts with the Russian ambassador and Mihail Formuzal, the former Bashkan of Gagauzia⁶. Promises were made to Gagauzia that Russia would watch the implementation of Gagauz autonomy (Secieru 2014, 5).

According to Calus, there are multiple reasons for the pro-Russian vote (2014, 7):

- Russian ban on Moldovan alcoholic products did not apply to Gagauzia (Rusila 2014)
- Gagauz migrant workers all go to Russia
- Russia is the main language in Gagauzia
- Gagauz have hardly any knowledge about the EU.

⁶ The Bashkan is the governor of Gagauzia

During these tense years, Russia started to pay more attention to Gagauzia; it became a gift for Russia to enlarge its influence in Moldova during its European rapprochement.

The ultimate solution for Russia would be a federation in which Gagauzia, Transnistria, and Moldova form one state. In this federation, the Pro-Russian (autonomous) republics Gagauzia and Transnistria would have a large amount of influence because their representatives would then be a part of the Moldovan government and so directly involved in the decision-making (Calus 2016, 74). Currently, the Gagauzian governor is part of the government, but since the autonomy of Gagauzia is poorly implemented, the governor's role is rather small.

4.7.4 Passportization

Over the past ten years Russia started to issue Russian passports to the citizens of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia; approximately 80% of Abkhaz citizens hold Russian passports. The issuing of Russian passports is one of the major measures for Russia to gain control over the dissident regions. Russia issuing passports to citizens of the two dissident regions has two benefits, according to Gerrits and Bader (2016, 303):

First, it is seen as an effective means to strengthen the loyalty of Abkhazian and South Ossetian citizens to Russia and by extension to weaken their affiliation to Georgia. Moreover, the issuing of passports has made it possible for Russia to invoke a responsibility-to-protect argument, as it did during the conflict with Georgia in August 2008.

The passportization was one of the reasons Georgia assumed it had to restore its territorial integrity (German 2006, 8). Besides Abkhazia also Transnistria and Gagauzia are part of the Passportizatsiya (Passportization policy), different scholars have emphasized that this passportization is smaller than in Abkhazia (Fisher 2016). The former Bashkan even asked to provide passports (Infotag 2014). As Fisher emphasizes (Fisher 2016):

The naturalisation of other states' citizens does not per se represent a violation of their sovereignty. But if it is conducted on a massive scale and those naturalised retain their residence abroad, it can produce a sovereignty conflict.

The passportization can produce a sovereignty conflict since Russia wants to 'protect' its citizens. Since many of 'its' passportized citizens live in that area it can react to protect these citizens when necessary, for example during a civil war. Therefore Russia is not only a third actor in all three regions, it is also a dangerous third party with a lot of influence that could escalate the frozen conflict.

4.8 Did this region organize events to sabotage EU rapprochement?

Both Abkhazia and Transnistria did not organize any events to prevent EU rapprochement of both Georgia and Moldova. At the time of their dissidence, the nineties, there were no signs of EU rapprochement for both Georgia and Moldova, and so both dissident regions could not have been involved in sabotaging EU rapprochement. Also in the years up to now both regions did not bother EU rapprochement of their sovereign state, mainly due to the fact that this issue is not part of the debate between the two parties.

Gagauzia, on the other hand, organized a referendum where the Gagauz were asked to indicate whether they supported the policy of joining the EU or the EAEU. The results were obvious. Gagauzia intended to block Moldova's rapprochement towards the EU. As explained, this referendum did not change the situation but gained increased attention from both the EU and Moldova. Besides a referendum, the people of Gagauzia regularly hold demonstrations to show their dissatisfaction with policies of both Moldova and the EU (TASS 2014).

Table 9. May Gagauzia be the new Luhansk, Abkhazia, or South Ossetia?

Interviewee 7	Interviewee 6	Interviewee 5	Vlah
No, I don't see Gagauzia as a problem, but everything can happen	This is overblown. They are afraid of military escalation. Currently, there is no real danger because Russia does not bother. Violence is not of the interest of Gagauzia. The new leader is not interested in military conflict.	Some have claimed that Gagauzia belongs to the Russian safety belt (Donbass to Gagauzia), It could be that this referendum belonged to the so-called pick plan to create this safety belt.	No, I don't really see problems occur in the near future. But we watch events in Moldova closely.

Due to the fact that a referendum was organized and demonstrations regularly occurred some scholars claimed that Gagauzia could be the next conflict zone on European soil. All interviewees indicate that these statements were overblown. However, they also emphasized the region should be watched closely because it remains tense. This extra

attention is caused by Gagauzia’s large Russian focus. Taking history and the current dissident regions Crimea, Luhansk, and Donbass into consideration, Gagauzia gained increased attention from both the EU and Moldova after the referendum in 2014. Both actors knew what could happen in regions with a large Russian focus.

4.9 Did the relations between the sovereign state and the dissident region changed over the past five years?

Over the past year relations between Moldova and Transnistria did not change essentially; the status quo remains and negotiations are ongoing but without visible results. The only remarkable change is the resumption of the 5+2 peace talks, these talks continue slowly but do not show decisive solutions⁷. The relations between Moldova and Transnistria can be classified as stuck and non-violent. The relations between Abkhazia and Georgia did change: the dialogue between both became less tense, and there are actual negotiations ongoing (Russian Delegation at the OSCE 2016), besides this it is now possible to cross the border between Abkhazia and Georgia.

Relations between Gagauzia and Moldova also changed: they became worse. For years now, the Gagauz representatives feel they only receive what is left from the state budget and not the amount they deserve (Interviewee 5 2017). Furthermore, there is a strong awareness that their autonomy is not implemented (Anghelov 2017). Thirdly, Gagauz do not feel respected in their relations with Russia. With the new Baskhan, Irina Vlah, the relationship changed but is still tense and under pressure.

Table 10. Is there a possible solution between Moldova and Gagauzia?

Interviewee 7	Anghelov	Interviewee 5	Pistrinciu	Vlah
It is up to the Moldovans themselves to solve this issue. Most citizens are not interested in fully reintegration.	Well, in fact, here is not really a problem so a solution seems not really optional to me. Moldova should pay more attention to our finances and autonomy.	A solution to this conflict is only possible when Moldova comes up it, which is probably giving Gagauzia more autonomy.	Gagauzia should leave the rhetoric behind, and Gagauzia should stop speculating about independence. Next to this, there should be better communication between the government and Gagauzia.	The government should start to hearing Gagauzians, and the EU should give its money directly instead to Moldova because they distribute this unfairly. Next to this, the solution is simple: respect our autonomy.

⁷ The 5 + 2 Peace talks involve Russia, US, Ukraine, Moldova, OSCE, EU and Transnistria. The talks concern the subjects: conflict settlement, dialogue and confidence building between Transnistria and Moldova.

As mentioned, one of the problems is the not respected autonomy of Gagauzia. According to most interviewees, respecting the autonomy would be a significant step in improving the relationship between Gagauzia and Moldova (Table 10).

This implementation of the autonomy can only be achieved when integration between the Moldovan and Gagauz communities takes place. This integration should be enforced by more contact between politicians and Gagauz inhabitants. Currently, this does not happen, Pistrinciuc indicates why (Pistrinciuc 2017):

The Moldovan government and Gagauzia need to go ahead with the '94 law. It should be harmonized with other laws. The government started this process, but it goes very slow. The option is to do this step by step without political discourse. We fear they might further separate from Moldova when the '94 law is implemented.

Since the Moldovan government still fears Gagauz secession, it has not implemented the Gagauz autonomy. In addition to communication and integration, Moldova and Gagauzia need to invest in confidence building. Therefor the relation between Moldova and Gagauzia remains tense and sensitive for further escalation because there is no progress visible in the policies of the Moldovan government which show any change in the policies towards Gagauzia.

4.10 Is the region mentioned as an obstacle in the AA?

All three dissident regions are not mentioned as obstacles in the AA. Both Transnistria and Abkhazia are mentioned as regions belonging to the territory of their sovereign states and the fact that the policies of the AA are not applicable within the regions. Gagauzia is not mentioned at all, possibly because at the time of provisionally applying, 2014, the situation in Gagauzia just started to become tense. Next to this, Gagauzia is part of the Moldovan Republic and so it is not necessary to mention the region separately, other Moldovan regions are not mentioned as well.

4.11 Does the EU see these dissident regions as a problem for accession?

There are a few leitmotifs that indicate that the EU does not consider dissident regions in its rapprochement policies. In 2004, the EU enlarged with ten new member states, including Cyprus. Cyprus has also a dissident region on its territory: The Turkish Republic of

Northern Cyprus. Up to today no solution has been found to solve this dispute. The EU has tried to solve this conflict by offering membership to Cyprus and, at the same time, adding the point of restoring the original Cypriot Republic to the list of demands for Turkish-EU membership (Tocci 2002), still not implemented. Although a dissident region was on its territory, EU accession for Cyprus happened, though without the northern part of the island.

Another example is Serbia. Unlike Cyprus, Serbia is still not a member state of the EU. Serbia currently is candidate member for the EU. One of the final struggles is the issue with the dissident region Kosovo. The EU demands the following concerning Serbian accession (European Commission 2012, 26):

A visible and sustainable improvement in relations between Serbia and Kosovo is needed so that both can continue on their respective paths towards the EU, while avoiding that either can block the other in these efforts. This process should gradually result in the full normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo with the prospect of both able to fully exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities within the EU will be an essential element of this process.

When reading this statement, a direct conflict solution is not a necessity for Serbian accession. The EU requires normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, a wide interpretable demand. This demand indicates that if a sovereign state contains a dissident region on its territory, it is still possible to become member state of the EU. EU membership does not require new member states to solve their territorial problems before accession.

This short analysis showed the EU accepted Cyprus as a member state while it had a dissident region on its territory. Moreover, the EU continues to negotiate with Serbia, which also has a dissident region on its territory. Also Moldova and Georgia are saddled with dissident regions, nevertheless it is a fact that rapprochement continues and increases. Because Abkhazia, Gagauzia, and Transnistria are in some way similar in their dissidence, to both Northern Cyprus and Kosovo, the EU should not see the three dissident regions as a problem in the accession process of Moldova or Georgia. It shows dissident regions do not have a strong ability to prevent accession of their sovereign state.

Notably, regions such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno Karabakh, and Transnistria have just few direct diplomatic lines with independent states⁸. Like most states, the EU member states do not recognize these regions. Still, one of these dissident regions does have diplomatic relations: Gagauzia. Gagauzia has strong economic and cultural ties with Turkey and Russia. Strong ties between de EU and Gagauzia are absent. Before 2014, diplomatic relations between the EU and Gagauzia were negligible but the referendum, the EU started to pay more attention to Gagauzia. Although the European Union does not recognize most of the dissident regions, it does have few policies regarding these regions to contain their influence or prevent escalation.

Table 11. Do you think Gagauzia has any influence on the rapprochement of Moldova to the EU?

Interviewee 7	Sirkeli	Anghelov	Pistrinciuc
No, it certainly does not influence Moldova's rapprochement.	Directly, no. And if we take into account the current Ukrainian situation, it is even less. Soft power of the European Union works; people are easy to manipulate	There is no big influence. Although Gagauzia is trying to influence the policies, but it does not succeed. Gagauzia wants mostly implementation of its autonomy rights.	Gagauzia's influence on Moldovan policies is big but not decisive. There is need for balance between this. It needs to be said that the Gagauz government cannot block decision making in Moldova.

Most interviewees indicated that Gagauzia does not influence the rapprochement of Moldova towards the EU, the interviewees have different reasons for this. Interviewee 7 emphasized Gagauzia is not important for Moldova in its decision making, and therefore, it will continue to ensure Gagauzia will not have this ability. Anghelov is consistent herewith but mentions Gagauzia continues to try to influence the process of the non-implemented autonomy, though without visible success. Sirkeli adds that Gagauzia does not really try to influence Moldova's EU rapprochement since it now receives more financial resources and attention.

Many of the interviewees agreed that Gagauzia cannot influence Moldova's EU rapprochement, though Gagauzia can influence specific aspects of the EU, such as the division of EU-Moldova resources. After the 2014 referendum, the annual funds to Gagauzia increased; so one can conclude that Gagauzia may have changed the nature of some EU

⁸ Transnistria is recognized by Abkhazia, the Republic of Artsakh and South Ossetia; Abkhazia is recognized by the Republic of Artsakh, Russia, Transnistria, South Ossetia, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru; South Ossetia is recognized by Russia, Transnistria, Abkhazia, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru and the Republic of Artsakh; The Republic of Artsakh is recognized by Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria.

funds. Gagauzia also raised the level of EU attention towards the region. The EU is now much more involved in its affairs than it was previously.

5. Conclusion

The research question of this thesis is: Do the dissident regions Abkhazia, Gagauzia, and Transnistria influence the rapprochement of their sovereign state towards the European Union? Table 5 indicated that all three dissident regions do not influence the EU rapprochement of their sovereign state. As shown in all three cases, the relationship or connection between the EU and dissident regions:

1. Is lacking;
2. Does not exist at all; or
3. The organization plays no significant role in their existence;

The EU is, in their eyes, connected to their sovereign state, from which they are alienated and so they see it as an “opponent”. On the other hand, the EU itself does not have great interest in the dissident regions since there is a non-recognition policy but also because the main negotiations are with the sovereign state and all non-agreeing parties are not part of this. The EU does not take them into account when creating policies regarding their sovereign state.

One of the first reasons to conclude that dissident regions have no influence are the accession of Cyprus and the accession negotiations of Serbia. As discussed, Cyprus joined the EU in 2004 while it had a dissident region, Northern Cyprus, on its territory. During the negotiations, Northern Cyprus was a part of the accession negotiations in a way that the EU tried to solve the conflict. This without significant result with as a consequence Cyprus joined the EU but without its northern part. The EU did not take the frozen conflict into consideration when it granted Cyprus membership of the EU, it was not a vital aspect of the negotiations. So it can be concluded that the EU will never let its accession policies get influenced by actors such as dissident regions. Another indicator of overlooking dissident regions are the accession negotiations between the EU and Serbia, which are currently ongoing. Although Serbia has a dissident actor on its territory the EU still continues its accession-negotiations with Serbia and does not consider Kosovo in it.

The last indicator are the sovereign states Moldova and Georgia. Here, the EU continues rapprochement policies while dissident regions are present. During this rapprochement the EU did not take the three regions into consideration, the sovereign state and the EU increased their rapprochement even more. The EU is not sensitive for the practices of different dissident regions, it does not take these actions into account when

making decisions about accession, membership or rapprochement. The most common practice concerning these regions is just ignoring them or trying to spawn them by assigning financial resources.

Like the EU, the sovereign states have similar, poor developed, relationships with dissident regions. As the EU, states will not consider dissident regions in their decision making about EU rapprochement. Subsequently, the interviewees also indicated Gagauzia does not have any influence on the rapprochement process. ‘There is some influence, but it is not decisive’, according to Pistrinciuc. In connection therewith, the reasons not to consider the argumentation of these dissident regions has not only to do with unwillingness. A sovereign state is responsible for all citizens within this state and often when the general public opinion is in favor of EU rapprochement, the state will act according to the will of the majority of the population. As interviewee 6 indicates (Interviewee 6 2017):

The Gagauz population is just 1.5% of the total Moldovan population, it is common sense that the Moldovan government does not let this 1.5% decide over the other large part of the population.

As the quote indicates, it is common sense not to let this small community decide for the whole Moldovan community. Therefore states will not take dissident regions, especially when they are small, into consideration when it concerns EU rapprochement but also other policies.

As mentioned, dissident regions do not influence the EU, the sovereign state and the relation between them. But several interviewees indicated that dissident regions can influence certain minor EU policies or policy implementation aspects. An example of this is the situation in 2014: Gagauzia organized a referendum which caused tensions within Moldova, also the EU noticed these tensions and acted upon them. These actions often have underlying aspects which come up when one looks deeper into the uncertainties of a region. Soon after the referendum was organized it became clear that the initial aim was not to put an end to EU rapprochement of Moldova but that it wanted more attention for its own internal situation. This internal situation is worrisome since the Gagauz:

1. Are less fortunate in Moldova’s prosperity
2. Have to deal with a high level of corruption
3. Receive too little of the central Moldovan state-budget to effectively tackle its internal problems.

4. Still have to deal with the non-implemented autonomy.

Therefore the Gagauz tried to draw attention by organizing this referendum. This 'cry for attention' was notified by the EU and acted upon it in two ways namely:

1. Demanding Moldova to respect the autonomy of Gagauzia as was determined in the '94 law.
2. Distribution of EU funds directly to Gagauzia instead of providing the central government the responsibility for the distribution of funds.

Especially second point is important for Gagauzia since EU financial resources were distributed by the central government and this government preferred other expenses above stimulating Gagauzia. As Vitalli Vlah mentions, after the referendum in 2014, Gagauzia received 6.5 million euros, and another five million euros will follow soon. Since these funds became available and the EU became more visible, Gagauzia's dissidence turned lower. To conclude, Gagauzia minimally changed the EU policies with regard to Moldova's financial resources.

Finally, in all three cases, Russia plays an active role. All three regions have active relations with Russia; they see Russia as their patron state, which can protect each of the regions. Furthermore, the spoken language in all three regions is Russian, and most importantly, all media and information sources are Russified. As mentioned by the different interviewees, people do not have an independent view of the news and what happening, they have a Russian perspectives due to complete Russian media coverage. These three aspects make the dissident character of the region stronger in its dissidence towards the sovereign nation. Moreover, Russia itself has no problems with supporting the regions in their dissidence because they create disorder and instability in the states surrounding Russia.

I started this research mostly because I was interested in Gagauzia stimulated by some of the following headlines: "Gagauzia: Growing Separatism in Moldova?", "Gagauzia: strategic point of pressure", "Gagauzia: A bone in the Throat", "Is Gagauzia next on Russia's list?", "Gagauzia: A new Stumbling block for Moldova", and "Gagauzia: Another Obstacle on Moldova's path to Europe". When I read these headlines, I was both surprised and distrustful. The headlines raised questions as to whether this region has the power to create what most of the authors claimed. However, as Interviewee 6 said, "This is overblown, they are afraid of military escalation. Gagauzia does not have this kind of influence". I agree with this statement and do not believe Gagauzia influences the EU rapprochement of Moldova. Also in

general, dissident regions do not have the power and capacities to influence their sovereign states on issues such as European Union rapprochement. The sovereign nation will mostly care about the majority of the people, its own interests and will not give in to the dissident region's demands. The reasons for this is to prevent the region will be an example for other regions. On the other hand, Gagauzia has proven that causing trouble can attract attention, which ensures acceding some of the demands. These extra treatments are often small enough to satisfy the needs of the dissident region. Besides capacities, both the EU and the sovereign state will not consider the dissident regions in their decision making, they will mostly ignore them.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Collins Dictionary*, s.v. “rapprochement”, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/rapprochement>
- Europe Foundation. (2016). Knowledge and Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia: Changes and Trends 2009–2013. *Eurasia Partnership Foundation*
- European Commission. (2003). Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours. *COM(2003) 0104 final*.
- European Commission. (2012). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013. *COM(2012) 600 Final*.
- European Council. (2014). Council Decision of 16 June 2014 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part. *OJ L 261, 2014/492/EU*
- European Economic and Social Committee. (2014). The Gagauz people are not against Europe [Press release]. *CES/14/10*
- European External Action Service. (2004). EU-Moldova Action Plan. *EEAS*. Retrieved from: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/moldova_enp_ap_final_en.pdf
- European External Action Service. (2008). Principles for the implementation of a Governance Facility under ENPI.
- European External Action Service. (2017). EU-Moldova Relations, Factsheet. *EEAS*. Retrieved from: <http://europa.eu/!PJ44Gb>
- European External Action Service. (2017). EU Local Statement on the Secretary General’s 15th Consolidated report on the Conflict in Georgia. *1284th Meeting of the Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe*.
- European External Action Service. (2017). Joint Proposal for a Council Decision on the Union's position within the Association Council established by the Association Agreement between the European Union, the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part,

- with regard to the adoption of the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agenda. *Join (2017) 8 Final 2017/0050(NLE)*
- European Parliament. (2011). European Parliament resolution of 17 November 2011 containing the European Parliament's recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the negotiations of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. *(2011/2133(INI))*
- European Union. (1994). Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova. *L/CE/MD/en*.
- European Union. (2014). Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part. *L260/4*
- European Union. (2017). Statement by the European Union at the 1139th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council. *PC.DEL/437/17 31 March 2017*
- European Union Border Assistance Mission. (2015). Progress Report 2005-2010. *EUBAM*.
- Finley, J. (2006). United States Mission to the OSCE: Transnistria Referendum. *PC.DEL/772/06*
- International Republican Institute. (2017a). Public Opinion Survey Residents of Moldova: September-October 2017. *Center for Insights in Survey Research*.
- International Republican Institute. (2017b). Survey of Public Opinion in Georgia: February-March 2017. *Center for Insights in Survey Research*.
- Kremlin. (2017). Joint news conference with President of Moldova Igor Dodon. *Speech presented at News conference in Kremlin, Moscow at 27 February 2017*.
- Macmillan Dictionary, s.v. “rapprochement”, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/rapprochement>
- Pilgrim Demo. (2017). Опрос общественного мнения в Гагаузии. *Pilgrim Demo*.
- Racz, A. (2016). The frozen conflicts of the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood and their impact on the respect of human rights. *Directorate-general for external policies*.
- Russian Delegation at the OSCE. (2016). Statement by Mr. Alexander Lukashevich, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, at the 1095th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council. *PC.DEL/426/16*

Academic articles

- American progress (2011). The Georgia Conflicts: What you need to know. *Center for American Progress*.
- Bendiek, A. (2004). Europe's conflict resolution: The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. *University of Bielefeld*
- Beyer, J. & Wolff, S. (2016). Linkage and leverage effects on Moldova's Transnistria problem. *East Europe and Politics*, 32(3), 335-354.
- Bugajski, J. (2012). Georgia's Post Election: Challenges and Priorities. *Center for Strategic & International Studies, Europe program*.
- Bulgari, G. (2015). Mapping the EU-Republic of Moldova Trajectory: Roadblocks on the Way to Economic Integration with the EU. *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, 15(4), 41-60.
- Bulut, R. (2016). The Economic and Political Structure of Gagauzian Turks. *Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 3(6), pp. 60-71.
- Calus, K. (2014). Gagauzia: growing separatism in Moldova? *OSW Commentary*.
- Cașuș, K. (2016). The unfinished state: 25 years of independent Moldova. *OSW STUDIES*.
- Cenușă, D. (2015). The EU risks alienating the Moldovan population if it fails to take a tougher line with the country's pro-European parties. *LSE European Institute*.
- Chinn, J. & Roper, S. (1998). Territorial autonomy in Gagauzia. *Nationalities Papers*, 26(1), 87-101.
- Danii, O. & Mascauteanu, M. (2011). Moldova under the European Neighbourhood Policy: 'Falling Between Stools'. *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 27(1), p.99-119
- Dembinska, M. & Iglesias, J. (2013). The Making of an Empty Moldovan Category within a Multiethnic Transnistrian Nation. *East European Politics and Societies*, 27(3).
- Emerson, M. and Cenușă, D. (2017) President Dodon's visit to Brussels – Contemplating economic suicide. *CEPS Policy Insight*.
- Fischer, S. (2010). The EU's non-recognition and engagement policy towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia. *European Union Institute for Security Studies*.

- Fischer, S. (2016). Not Frozen!: The Unresolved Conflicts over Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh in Light of the Crisis over Ukraine. *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*.
- German, T. (2006). Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Collision of Georgian and Russian Interests. *Research Programme Russia/NIS*.
- Gerrits, A.W.M. & Bader, M. (2016). Russian patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: implications for conflict resolution, *East European Politics*, 32:3, 297-313.
- International Crisis Group. (2006). Moldova's Uncertain Future. *Europe Report n.175*.
- Khidasheli, T. (2011). Georgia's European Way. *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*
- Kvarchelia, L. (2012). Perceptions of the EU in Abkhazia and prospects for the EU-Abkhazia engagement. *Conciliation Resources*.
- Litra, L. & Chkhikvadze, I. (2016). EU Membership Perspective for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: Impossible, Forgotten, or hidden? *Institute of World Policy*.
- McLaughlin, W. (2003). The use of the Internet for political action by non-state dissident actors in the Middle East. *First Monday*, 8(11).
- Minzarari, D. (2014). The Gagauz Referendum in Moldova: A Russian Political Weapon? *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 11(23).
- Moore, W. (2012). Non-Violent v. Violent Dissent before the Arab Spring: Bahrain, Jordan & Syria, 1990–2004. *Florida State University*.
- Montesano, F. Togt van der, T. & Zweers, W. (2016). The Europeanisation of Moldova: Is the EU on the Right Track? *Clingendael*.
- Park, J. (2014). The European Union's Eastern Partnership. *Council on Foreign Relations*.
- Petersen, A. (2008). The 1992-93 Georgia-Abkhazia War: A Forgotten Conflict. *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 2 (4), 188-199
- Pegg, S. (1998). De facto states in the international system. Vancouver, B.C: *Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia*
- Peters, M. (2016). Dissident Thought: Systems of Repression, Networks of Hope. *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*. Vol. 8(1).
- Popescu, N. (2006). The EU and Transnistria From Deadlock to Sustainable Settlement. *IPF Policy Brief*.

- Popescu, N. & Litra, L. (2012). Transnistria: A Bottom-Up Solution. *European Council on Foreign Relations*.
- Preda, G. (2013). German Foreign Policy towards the Romanian Oil during 1938-1940. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 3(3), 326-329
- Roper, S. (2001). Regionalism in Moldova: The case of Transnistria and Gagauzia. *Regional and Federal Studies*, 11(3), 101-122.
- Sanchez, W. (2009). The “Frozen” Southeast: How the Moldova-Transnistria Question has become a European Geo-Security Issue. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*.
- Scheffers, B. (2010). Tempering expectations: EU involvement with the Transdnistriean conflict. *Security and Human Rights*, 21(4), 293-301
- Secieru, S. (2014). Can Moldova stay on the road to Europe? ECFR Policy Memo, Brussels: *European Council of Foreign Relations*.
- Secieru, S. (2014). Keep the Eyes Wide Open: EU in Moldova. *Centrul Român de Politici Europene*.
- Tocci, N. (2002). Cyprus and the European Union Accession Process: Inspiration for Peace or Incentive for Crisis? *Turkish Studies*, 3(2).
- Vahl, M. & Emerson, M. (2004). Moldova and the Transnistrian Conflict. *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Issue 1/2004.
- Valasek, T. (2008). What does the War in Georgia mean for EU Foreign Policy? *Centre for European Reform*.
- Wolff, S. (2011). A resolvable frozen conflict? Designing a settlement for Transnistria. *Nationalities Papers*, 39(6), 863-870
- Zabarah, D. (2012). Opportunity structures and group building processes: An institutional analysis of the secession processes in Pridnestrovie and Gagauzia between 1989 and 1991. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 45(1-2), 183-192
- Zemskov-Züge, A. (2015). Dealing with the Past in the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict: The Power of Narratives, Spaces and Rituals. *Berghof Foundation*.

Books

- Coppieters, B. (2004). The Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict. In *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution. Case Studies from the European Periphery*, edited by Bruno Coppieters et al. Gent: Academia Press
- Markenov, S. (2015). The conflict in and over Abkhazia. In *"Frozen Conflicts" in Europe*, edited by Anton Bebler. Opladen: Budrich Barbara
- Munteanu, I. (2002). Social Multipolarity and Political Violence. In *National integration and violent Conflict in Post-Soviet Societies: The Cases of Estonia and Moldova*, edited by Pal Kolsto. 197-231. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Rosecrance, R. & Stein, A. (2006). *No more states?: Globalization, national self-determination, and terrorism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Shevchenko, K. & Tekushev, I. (2013). Abkhazia in Public Opinion Polls. In *Abkhazia: Between the Past and the Future*, edited by I. Tekushev, S. Markedonov & K. Shevchenko. 115-128. Prague: Medium Orient
- Shellman, S. & Moore, H. (2003). Taking Turns: A Theory and a Model of Government - dissident Interactions, *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Schmidtke, O. & Yekelchik, S. (2008). Europe's last frontier?: Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine between Russia and the European Union. New York, NY: *Palgrave MacMillan*.
- Trenin, D. (1996). Russia's Security Interests and Policies in the Caucasus Region. In: *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, edited by Bruno Coppieters. Brussels: VUB Press.
- Tsereteli, M. (2013). The Scars of Separatism: The impact of Internal Conflicts on Georgian Foreign Policy. In *Georgian Foreign Policy: The Quest for Sustainable Security*, edited by Kakachia, Kornely. Tbilisi: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
- Wielgohs, J. & Pollack, D. (2004) Comparative Perspectives on Dissent and Opposition to Communist Rule. In *Dissident and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe: Origins of Civil Society and Democratic Transition*, edited by Wielgohs, J. & Pollack, D. Buerlington, VT: Ashgate.

Interviews

- Anghelov, V. (2017). Interview by Gijs Houben. Personal interview. Comrat Moldova, April

- Pistrinciuc, V. (2017). Interview by Gijs Houben. Personal interview. Chisinau Moldova, April 28.
- Sirkeli, M. (2017). Interview by Gijs Houben. Personal interview. Chisinau Moldova, June 2
- Vlah. V. (2017). Interview by Gijs Houben. Personal interview. Comrat Moldova, June 2.
- Interviewee 4. (2017). Interview by Gijs Houben. Personal interview. Chisinau Moldova, April 27.
- Interviewee 5. (2017). Interview by Gijs Houben. Personal interview. Brussels Belgium, April 10.
- Interviewee 6. (2017). Interview by Gijs Houben. Personal interview. Brussels Belgium, April 10.
- Interviewee 7. (2017). Interview by Gijs Houben. Personal interview. Brussels Belgium, April 10.

Online sources

- Agenda.ge. (2016). Georgian man shot six times, killed by Russia's border guards near ABL with Abkhazia. *Agenda.ge*. Retrieved from: <http://agenda.ge/news/58402/eng>
- Caucasus Times. (2016). Abkhazia: 45.2% of those polled call for independence; 45.3% for participation in various integrational projects. *Caucasus Times*. Retrieved from: <https://caucasustimes.com/en/abkhazia-45-2-of-those-polled-call-for-independence-45-3-for-participation-in-various-integrational-projects/>
- Civil Georgia. (2017). Georgia Celebrates Visa Free Travel to EU. *Civil Georgia*. Retrieved from: <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29969>
- Clamadieu, S. (2017). What if EU Member States Recognized Abkhazia? *International Perspective*. Retrieved from: <http://www.internationalperspective.be/insight/2017/02/what-if-the-european-union-recognized-abkhazia/>
- Farchy, J. (2014). [Vladimir Putin Signs Treaty with Abkhazia and puts Tbilisi on the Edge](#). *Financial Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ft.com/content/24239f90-73e8-11e4-82a6-00144feabdc0?mhq5j=e1>
- Infotag. (2014). Is "passport" expansion threatening Moldova? *Infotag Newsagency*. Retrieved from: <http://www.infotag.md/interview-en/187556/>

- RadioFreeEurope. (2014). Gagauzia Voters Reject Closer EU Ties For Moldova. *RFERL*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-gagauz-referendum-counting/25251251.html>
- Rusila, A. (2014). Pridnestrovie and Gagauzia in the context of Ukraine. *Voltaire network*. Retrieved from: <http://www.voltairenet.org/article183141.html>
- Severin, I. & Shary, A. (2014). Гагаузия. Референдум раздора. *RFERL*. Retrieved from: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/25247722.html>
- TASS. (2014). Rivals of rapprochement with EU say protest actions start in several Moldova cities. Retrieved from: <http://tass.com/world/738031>
- Trading Economics. (2017). Moldova GDP Annual Growth Rate. Retrieved from: <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/moldova/gdp-annual-growth-rate>
- University of Southern California. (2018). Theoretical Framework: Importance of Theory. *Research guides*. Retrieved from: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/theoreticalframework>
- De Waal, T. (2016). An Eastern European frozen conflict the EU got right. *Politico*. Retrieved from: <http://www.politico.eu/article/transnistria-an-eastern-european-frozen-conflict-the-eu-got-right-moldova-russia-ukraine/>
- Whewell, T. (2015). The Great Moldovan Bank Robbery. *BBC*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33166383>