



Study Guide
for
the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

**Topic Area: "Operation Eastern Anchor - The case of Transnistria and
Moldova's Hybrid Resilience"**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Welcoming Letter	3
2. Introduction to the Committee	4
2.1 North Atlantic Treaty Organization	4
2.2 NATO Summit.....	6
3. Introduction to the Topic Area	7
4. Key words and definitions:.....	8
4.1 Frozen Conflict.....	8
4.2 Hybrid Warfare	8
4.3 Status Quo.....	8
4.4 Strategic Communications (StratCom)	8
4.5 Cognitive Warfare	9
4.6 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)	9
4.7 Satellite States.....	10
4.8 Individually Tailored Partnership Programmes (ITPP's).....	10
5. Legal Framework	11
5.1 Washington Treaty.....	11
5.1.1 Article 3	11
5.1.2 Article 4	11
5.1.3 Article 5	11
5.2 Article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova.....	12
5.3 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)	12
5.4 Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative (DCB)	13
5.5 Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)	13
6. Main Discussion of the Topic.....	14
6.1 Historical Background	14
6.1.1 NATO - Moldova Relations.....	16
7. Conclusion	20
8. Points to be Addressed	20
9. Bibliography	21

1. Welcoming Letter

Esteemed Heads of State,

It is our utmost honor to welcome you to Rhodes MRC High School Edition 2026 and specifically, to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)!

This year's topic, "Operation Eastern Anchor - The case of Transnistria and Moldova's Hybrid Resilience", brings to the table one of the most prominent challenges the Alliance is currently facing. The Russian Federation, NATO's primary, direct and most significant threat has used satellite states throughout the years in order to showcase its aggressive stance and counter Western resistance. Transnistria is one of the most notable case studies since it has prevented the Republic of Moldova from fully integrating into Western institutions and keeping it in a constant condition of instability. This case, established the blueprint for what we now know as "Frozen Conflict".

As Heads of State or Government of your respective countries, you are called upon to navigate the issue at the highest decision-making level. This guide will function as a starting point for your own research, providing you with the necessary information and the most important points of discourse surrounding the topic. However, we heavily urge you to extend your research beyond the study guide's content and conduct a country-specific policy assessment for the nation you represent. Most importantly, however, you shall strive to understand the intricate dynamics of working as an Alliance member, under the exciting twist of crisis scenarios on the Alliance's mandate, and both the opportunities and limitations that characterize NATO's scope of action.

Throughout your preparation for this challenging committee, as well as during the conference, the two of us will assist you in every step of the way. We are delighted to meet you all in November!

Best Regards,

Paris Patsis, Secretary General

Evangelia Gkolemi, Deputy Secretary General

2. Introduction to the Committee

2.1 North Atlantic Treaty Organization

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, a geopolitical climate of political instability, financial ruin and general insecurity regarding national sovereignty and defence capabilities plagued the European continent. In this context, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in the year 1949, as a Western “co-operative security Alliance” that fosters mutual solidarity and a collective defense mechanism against common threats to the members’ strategic interests. As of today, the Alliance comprises a total of 32 Member-States, also known as the NATO Allies.

NATO operates under the Washington Treaty, which obtains its legitimacy from Article 51 of the UN Charter concerning “...the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations”.¹ Similarly, the principle of collective defence is codified and enshrined under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty: all NATO Members



agree to collectively safeguard the territory of an Ally, in case of an armed attack, within the geographical limits of the North Atlantic region. Thus, NATO’s main purpose is to safeguard peace

¹ “United Nations Charter”, *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

and security for all Allies in Europe and North America, by prioritizing peaceful nonmilitary means and even resorting to military alternatives when needed. The strategic direction of the Alliance evolves and changes over the years, as the Alliance has to respond to emerging crises and geopolitical developments.²

Currently, the Alliance remains committed to the following three core tasks:

1. Deterrence and Defence

Deterrence constitutes NATO's strategy of preventing aggression by showcasing credible military strength and readiness, while Defence encompasses the protection of member states through collective military action and preparedness against conventional, as well as evolving threats. This requires that Allies pool their tangible and non-tangible military resources and establish common political decision-making systems.³

2. Crisis Prevention and Management

Over the years, NATO has strived to maintain long-term preparedness and resilience in order to respond effectively and timely to any emerging crises or areas of instability, whether these require political and diplomatic means or military and strategic action. However, in recent years the Alliance's strategic focus also incorporates preemptive crisis prevention, in addition to corrective crisis management.⁴

3. Cooperative Security

NATO's core task of Cooperative Security aims for collaboration between the Alliance and non-member nations in order to enhance collective defence, crisis management, conflict prevention and stability.⁵ Lastly, NATO operates militarily and politically in the following 5 operational domains: Land, Air, Sea, Cyberspace and Space. Most of NATO's expeditions, however, require interoperability between multiple domains for a singular task.⁶

² "The North Atlantic Treaty", NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm

³ "Deterrence and defence", NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_133127.htm

⁴ "Crisis management", NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49192.htm

⁵ "Partnerships and Cooperative Security", NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_79430.htm

⁶ "Multi-Domain Operations in NATO – Explained.", NATO's Strategic Warfare Development Command, October 5, 2023, <https://www.act.nato.int/article/mdo-in-nato-explained/>

2.2 NATO Summit

The North Atlantic Council (NAC) constitutes the principal political and decision-making body within NATO, and the only Committee that derives its authority directly from the North Atlantic Treaty (Article 9). It provides the forum where all member states - each represented on an equal footing - discuss, consult, and take decisions on issues affecting the security and defense of the Alliance. The NAC operates at three main levels: the Permanent Representatives (Ambassadors), who meet at least once a week; the Ministers of Foreign Affairs or Defense, who usually meet two to three times a year; and the Heads of State and Government, who meet at Summits, typically once every year or two.⁷

However, when the Allies are called upon to discuss the most important issues and provide major strategic directions for its activities, the Alliance meets at the highest level - the NATO Summit.



Heads of State and Government meet in order to launch new initiatives, to establish new policies and with the authority to intervene in the Washington Treaty by amending it and to decide upon expanding the Alliance and reinforcing partnerships with non-

members and other organizations. A defining characteristic of the NATO Committee is its principle of consensus, first adopted in 1949. All decisions are taken collectively and unanimously - that is, no formal voting occurs, and a decision is deemed adopted only when no member formally objects. This ensures that every Ally, regardless of size or power, retains an equal voice in shaping NATO's policy. This procedure however, makes the adoption of decisions more

⁷ "North Atlantic Council (NAC)", NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49763.htm

challenging as the final outcome should take into consideration not only the collective interests of the Alliance but also the national interests of all its member states, especially in times of crisis. Legally, NAC decisions - especially when recorded as Council Conclusions or Summit Communiqués - constitute the authoritative expression of the collective will of the Alliance. These decisions can modify internal NATO procedures, initiate new missions, and authorize military operations consistent with the purposes of the Washington Treaty and Article 51 of the UN Charter.⁸

In Rhodes MRC High School Edition 2026, the delegates representing Heads of State and Government will meet at the highest level, which is the NATO Summit - thus, they will be called upon to approach matters with utmost urgency, decisiveness and total control of their nations' foreign policy.

⁸ "NATO Summits," NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50115.htm

3. Introduction to the Topic Area

The case of Transnistria is one of the most complex and enduring challenges that European security is facing, and threatens the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. It is a great example of how Russia uses satellite states to project power and create a constant state of instability by maintaining a permanent military presence and fostering unrecognized political structures.

The current crisis marks a dramatic and dangerous shift in the status quo. From a “frozen conflict”, it transformed into an active and multidimensional conflict. The coup d’etat is characterized by a hybrid siege that replaced the current government with a Kremlin-backed military administration. The rapid Russian military buildup represents a direct threat to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and is testing the core tasks of the Alliance. This committee is tasked with navigating a landscape defined by hybrid warfare where the lines of war and peace are permanently blurred. You must determine a unified strategy to counter this aggressive stance and re-establish the international order of the region.



Within this context, this study guide is designed to help you understand the historical background of the case and analyze the current situation surrounding the issue being discussed. In addition to exploring the main topic, you should be prepared for unexpected crisis events that may change the course of events and require your response. These situations are designed to challenge your critical thinking, adaptability, and ability to make informed decisions in a changing environment.

4. Key words and definitions

4.1 Frozen Conflict

A frozen conflict is a “no war no peace situation”, a stalemate in which the active warfare has ceased without a peace agreement being reached by the parties involved. In this way, the situation remains unstable and the risk of future hostilities remains elevated.⁹

4.2 Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare is a tactic that combines military methods and non-military methods, including disinformation, cyberattacks, economic pressure and deployment of irregular armed groups, without going beyond the limits of formal warfare. Their aim is to destabilize, erode public trust in the state and influence decision-making processes at regional or international level. Hybrid methods focus on the vulnerabilities of a state and are used to blur the lines between war and peace and attempt to “spare” doubt in the minds of target populations.¹⁰

4.3 Status Quo

“Status quo” is a Latin phrase, literally meaning “the state in which”. It is used to describe the existing state of affairs or social and political situation. It describes how things currently are.¹¹

⁹ Enzler, Livia. *Frozen Conflicts in International Law*. sui generis Verlag, 2025.

¹⁰ NATO, “Countering Hybrid Threats,” 2025, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/deterrence-and-defence/countering-hybrid-threats>

¹¹ *status quo*. (2026). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/status-quo>

4.4 Strategic Communications (StratCom)

StratCom is the coordinated use of communication to influence the perception, attitude and behavior of the targeted population in order to support an organizational or policy objective and promote its narrative.¹² Sectors of StratCom include Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Information and Psychological Operations, which make appropriate use of words, actions, images, and symbols to achieve their cognitive goals.¹³

4.5 Cognitive Warfare

Cognitive Warfare is the fight for cognitive superiority. It is an unconventional military and strategic form of confrontation by using digital tools (mainly cyberspace) with the aim of modifying the enemy's cognitive processes. In contrast with hybrid warfare that focuses on information control, cognitive warfare focuses on the way humans perceive information, influencing, for instance, the decision-making process, presenting a digitally contaminated reality and causing mental distortions.¹⁴

4.6 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is the largest regional security organization in the world, comprising 57 states across 3 continents. It was founded in 1975 as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and in 1995 it was renamed to OSCE.¹⁵ It operates on three domains: the politico-military domain related to arms control, the economic/environmental domain and the human rights domain focusing on democracy and media freedom. It specializes in early warning, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation.¹⁶

¹² GLOBSEC. "Words to Action: Best Practices in Strategic Communication." April 11, 2024. <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/words-action-best-practices-strategic-communication>.

¹³ NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. "About Strategic Communications." Accessed May 5, 2026. https://stratcomcoe.org/about_us/about-strategic-communications/1

¹⁴ Steen Søndergaard NATO Chief Scientist. "Cognitive Warfare NATO Chief Scientist Research Report," January 2024, <https://www.sto.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/chief-scientist-report-cognitive-warfare-final.pdf>

¹⁵ OSCE. "What Is the OSCE?" <https://www.osce.org/who/87>

¹⁶ OSCE. "What We Do." <https://www.osce.org/fields-of-work>

4.7 Satellite States

A satellite state is a country formally independent but under heavy military, political and economic influence or control by another, more powerful country.¹⁷ These states often operate under the foreign nation's policy and ideology and serve as buffer zones.

4.8 Individually Tailored Partnership Programmes (ITPP's)

Individually Tailored Partnership Programmes (ITPP) are the evolution of the Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAP) (2002-2023) as the new version of NATO partnerships. In Moldova's case, ITPP demonstrates a "bridge" between Moldova's neutrality and the need for security and is implemented in a four-year strategic planning cycle in five distinct outputs. At the beginning of the cycle (Output 1), strategic objectives are defined and specific milestones are co-defined by the two members to ensure mutual commitment (Output 2). The implementation of these objectives is carried out through a detailed action plan (Output 3) that is adapted to the ambitions and needs of both parties. In the middle of the cycle, an interim evaluation is carried out (Output 4) to attain the outcomes described in the goals and to recommend updates to the implementation plan for the final two years of the cycle. It concludes with the final evaluation at the end of the fourth cycle (Output 5), which focuses on the overall progress towards achieving the goal to the point where allies will approve the assessment and propose new objectives and cooperation goals to the partners for the following ITPP.¹⁸

5. Legal Framework

Washington Treaty

The Washington Treaty, drafted in 1949, also known as the North Atlantic Treaty, is the common constitutional founding treaty of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), focusing on the

¹⁷ Study.com. "Satellite Nations: Definition & the Cold War." <https://study.com/academy/lesson/satellite-nations-definition-the-cold-war.html>

¹⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Individually Tailored Partnership Programmes 2024. <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/individually-tailored-partnership-programmes>

structure of the alliance and the member states' common purpose of collective defence. The treaty consists of 14 articles of which the main pillars are Article 3, Article 4 and Article 5.

Article 3

Article 3, constitutes the cornerstone of NATO's internal cohesion as it imposes on member states the commitment to self-help and mutual assistance to jointly resist armed attacks.¹⁹

Article 4

Article 4 of the Washington Treaty (1949)²⁰, establishes the right of the members to initiate formal consultations at any time if they feel that their territorial integrity, security and political independence is threatened. The members of the alliance thus commit to consulting together whenever a danger arises and to devising a common strategy for emerging threats.

Article 5

Article 5 constitutes the core of the Washington Treaty (1949), establishing the principle of collective defence, according to which an armed attack against one ally constitutes an armed attack against the whole alliance. In this case the member states of NATO's alliance undertake to assist the aggressor state with any action deemed necessary, including the use of force with the aim of restoring security in the region. Its validity is derived from Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which recognizes the inherent right of individual and collective defence.²¹ It is of cardinal importance to clarify that partner states of NATO, such as Moldova do not have the right to invoke article 5 as they are not official member states.

¹⁹ "The North Atlantic Treaty" 2025, <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/1949/04/04/the-north-atlantic-treaty>

²⁰ "The North Atlantic Treaty." Nato.int, 2025 <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/1949/04/04/the-north-atlantic-treaty>

²¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. "Collective Defence and Article 5.", 2025. <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/introduction-to-nato/collective-defence-and-article-5>

Article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova

Article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova reads as follows “(1) The Republic of Moldova proclaims its permanent neutrality. (2) The Republic of Moldova does not admit the stationing of any foreign military troops on its territory.”. It establishes the regime of permanent neutrality stipulating that the Republic of Moldova does not allow the stationing of foreign military troops on its territory.²² Although this provision would constitute a legal “shield”, it operates within a paradoxical framework, given that the continued presence of Russian troops in Transnistria constitutes a violation of this constitutional imperative. Further cooperation between NATO and Moldova is not a circumvention of Article 11 but an adaptation of it to modern threats. Although NATO has no direct role in the conflict resolution process in Transnistria, it closely observes possible developments in the region. Taking into consideration paragraph 81 of the Vilnius Summit Communiqué of 2023, the alliance continues to support the Republic of Moldova’s right to decide its foreign policy free from outside interference, while urging Russia to withdraw from the region.²³

Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) signed on the 19th of November 1990 is a pivotal agreement to European security as it imposed limits on the number of tanks, armored vehicles, artillery and fighter aircraft, stationed from the Atlantic region to the Urals. It also introduced territorial limits, making it clear that no state could maintain military forces on the territory of another without the consent of the host state. Article XVI of the treaty provides the legal basis for the Joint Consultative Group to denounce non-compliance and to ensure the practical implementation of the treaty. In NATO’s case, the treaty serves as a legal basis for the

²² The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, Legal Framework, Constitution
<https://www.old.parlament.md/CadrulLegal/Constitution/tabid/151/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

²³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Vilnius Summit Communiqué 2023
<https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2023/07/11/vilnius-summit-communique>

provision of defence assistance. In 2023, Russia suspended its participation in the Treaty²⁴, a decision that NATO Allies officially condemned.²⁵

Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative (DCB)

The Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative (DCB), launched at the Wales Summit in 2014, is NATO's tool for providing strategic, advisory and practical support to elected partners such as the Republic of Moldova, with the aim of building sustainable and resilient defence institutions. It is a process based on the request of the recipient state, ensuring that actions are tailored to the needs of each partner such as ensuring national security, defence planning and training of local forces and countering hybrid threats. In Moldova's case, the initiative is implemented through the Liaison Office in Chisinau, utilising both the special trust fund (DCB trust fund) and the resources of the NATO 2030 agenda.

Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)

Status of Forces Agreement determines the legal framework governing the presence of foreign military personnel, employees and dependents within a host country, seeking to balance the national sovereignty of the receiving state with the operational needs of the sending state's forces, while covering issues such as criminal and civil jurisdiction, taxation and customs regulations. The terms of the agreements differ from country to country, even within common frameworks such as the NATO SOFA.²⁶ The NATO SOFA is a multilateral agreement that is applicable not only to the member states of NATO, but also extends to additional 24 countries through the Partnership for Peace programme (PfP), which although the fact that they are not members of the alliance, they are committed to respect the terms of the agreement within the framework of their enhanced security and bilateral cooperation with the NATO alliance.²⁷

²⁴ The Moscow Times, "Russia Formally Quits Post-Cold War Arms Treaty with Europe." , , , November 7, 2023. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/11/07/russia-formally-quits-post-cold-war-arms-treaty-with-europe-a83017>

²⁵ "AGREEMENT on ADAPTATION of the TREATY on CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES in EUROPE," November 19, 1999. <https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/e/3/14108.pdf>

²⁶ LegalClarity. "The SOFA Agreement: Definition, Coverage, and Jurisdiction," December 14, 2025. <https://legalclarity.org/the-sofa-agreement-definition-coverage-and-jurisdiction/>

²⁷ Mason, R. "CRS Report for Congress Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA): What Is It, and How Has It Been Utilized?," 2009. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA502337.pdf>

6. Main Discussion of the Topic

6.1 Historical Background

The region of Transnistria is a unique case in the post-Soviet space since its identity was shaped through a different historical course than that of Moldova, “Bessarabia”. The region of Bessarabia between the Prut and Dniester rivers was ceded to the Russian Empire in 1812 and has been a Russian province ever since. After the October Revolution in 1918, Bessarabia was united with Romania, a move that the USSR never recognized.²⁸

In the context of this dispute, in 1924, the soviet authorities established the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), on the east bank of the Dniester. According to an



OSCE report of 1994, the MASSR served as a strategic “stepping stone” for the reconquest of Bessarabia. This strategy was implemented in 1940, under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact²⁹, when Soviet troops annexed Bessarabia and established the unified Moldavian SSR, forcibly merging Bessarabia with the pre-existing autonomous region on the east bank. This integration was definitively ratified by the Paris Peace Treaties in 1947.³⁰

During the Soviet period, Moldova underwent a systematic policy of Russification. Moscow imposed the country’s isolation from the Romanian cultural space, mandating the Cyrillic Alphabet for the Moldovan language and relegating it to a secondary position compared to Russian. In the late 1980s, influenced by the liberalizing atmosphere of Perestroika, the political movement “The Popular Front of Moldova” emerged and demanded the reinstatement of the

²⁸ OSCE, TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT Origins and Main Issues <https://moldova.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/4/3/42308.pdf>

²⁹ “Nazi-Soviet Pact” World History Encyclopedia, November 22, 2024 https://www.worldhistory.org/Nazi-Soviet_Pact/

³⁰ Munez, Everett. “Paris Peace Treaties | Terms, Summary, & Conference | Britannica.” [www.britannica.com, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Paris-Peace-Treaties-1947](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Paris-Peace-Treaties-1947)

Latin Alphabet and the recognition of Romanian as an official language. This movement caused a deep conflict of values. While on the west bank, the desire for national emancipation prevailed, on the east bank (Transnistria), the Slavic population felt a strong attachment to “socialist values” and the USSR, fearing that independence would lead to ethnic Moldovan dominance or direct union with Romania.

The turning point was the adoption of the Language Law in August 1989³¹, which established the Moldovan language (in Latin script) as the sole official language. This decision triggered mass strikes and demonstrations on the east bank. In response, on September 2, 1990, the leadership in Tiraspol proclaimed the “Transnistrian Moldavian Republic” which was not recognized by Chisinau. The tension quickly escalated into an armed conflict, with the first incidents recorded in Dubossary in November 1990. The fighting culminated in June 1992 in the town of Tighina/Bendery, where large-scale military operations were conducted using heavy weaponry. According to an investigation report of the OSCE, the 14th Guards Combined Arms Army of the Russian military played a decisive role in the outcome of the war by intervening on the side of the separatists, leading to the expulsion of the Moldovan forces of the town. The war left behind hundreds of dead and about 100.000 refugees.³²

The conflict was temporarily ended by the Moscow Agreement of 21st July 1992³³, signed by presidents Boris Yeltsin and Mircea Snegur. The agreement imposed an immediate ceasefire and the creation of a demilitarized security zone. To enforce it, a Tripartite Joint Control Commission (JCC) was established, assisted by a group of 30 military observers, 10 from each of the parties (Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, PMR). Although a ceasefire was established, the tense atmosphere transformed the ceasefire into a “frozen conflict”. In the aftermath, the role of the international community was upgraded. The OSCE mission to Moldova was established to facilitate a political settlement. According to its 1994 report the mission played a central role in

³¹ Comai, Giorgio. “1989 Language Laws in Moldova.” Giorgio Comai, October 28, 2014. <https://giorgiocomai.eu/post/1989-language-laws-in-moldova/> „

³² OSCE, TRANSDNISTRIAN CONFLICT Origins and Main Issues <https://moldova.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/4/3/42308.pdf>

³³ “Agreement Reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations,” April 10, 1998, UK-Ireland, https://www.peaceagreements.org/media/documents/ag1024_56c5f9e3d3890.pdf

submitting proposals for a “special status” of autonomy for Transnistria, while ensuring the territorial integrity of Moldova. At the same time the OSCE organization pressed for the withdrawal of the 14th Guards Combined Arms Army, considering its support for stable political structures incompatible with Moldovan sovereignty.

The political deadlock remained, as efforts to define a special status for Transnistria failed. The Russian Federation refused to withdraw The 14th Guards Combined Arms Army from the region, linking its military presence to the achievement of a definite political solution, which continues to undermine the full territorial integrity of Moldova to this day.

6.1.1 NATO - Moldova Relations

The historical relations between Moldova and NATO began when Moldova joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992, but were substantially developed in 1994 through the Partnership for Peace Program (PfP), which allowed the country to modernise its defence structures while respecting its constitutional neutrality.³⁴ After 2006, this cooperation evolved with the adoption of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) and its participation in the KFOR³⁵ mission in Kosovo. Since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine (2014 till today), NATO-Moldova’s cooperation remains close and partnership-based, as through the Defence and Related Capacity Building Initiative (DCB)³⁶ NATO provides the country with enhanced assistance focusing on hybrid resilience, cyber defence, and strategic communication, with the aim of strengthening Moldova’s defence capacity to external pressures.

6.2 Current Situation

On the night of the 17th of October 2026, the long-standing administration of Tiraspol was overthrown in a rapid, 48-hour internal coup. The Transnistrian Security Services (MGB) initiated

³⁴North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Relations with the Republic of Moldova, 30 October 2025, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/relations-with-the-republic-of-moldova>

³⁵ Moldpres.md. “New Contingent of Moldova’s National Army Detached to KFOR Mission,” July 21, 2025. <https://www.moldpres.md/eng/society/new-contingent-of-moldova-s-national-army-deployed-for-kfor-mission>

³⁶ “Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative(DCB), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, last updated 29 May 2024, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/defence-and-related-security-capacity-building-initiative> first broadcast

a digital siege and started controlling the social media channels and news outlets of Transnistria for 72 hours. They firstly broadcasted a video, where Valeriy Gebos³⁷, the chairperson of the Committee of State Security of the MGB, where he stated that the President, Vadim Krasnoselsky, was planning on surrendering the Cobasna ammunition depot to Moldovan and NATO forces. Firstly, the news outlets were filled with reports stating that Moldovan and Romanian armies were massing at the border to invade Transnistria. Hours later, a leaked audio recording was broadcast, which entailed a conversation between the President and a high-ranking NATO official negotiating a secret “surrender” of the Cobasna ammunition depot to NATO in exchange for a large sum of money.

The 1411th Artillery Ammunition Depot, or commonly known as the Cobasna ammunition depot, is a large ammunition depot located in the Village of Cobasna in Transnistria. The government of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) has denied access to international observers, excluding the Russian military forces located in the region. Only the Russian and Transnistrian authorities have the detailed information regarding the amount and state of the stored weapons.

This artillery ammunition depot was an arsenal of the Western Military District of the USSR during the Soviet period. As Russian forces withdrew from East Germany and Czechoslovakia, most of their ammunition was stored in Cobasna. Currently, there are approximately 20,000 tons of weapons and ammunition stored at this warehouse, 57% of which cannot be used or transported as they are obsolete. Explosives like TNT and nitrocellulose stored there have become unstable over time, so a potential explosion of the deposits would signify a humanitarian and ecological disaster. The Moldovan Academy of Sciences estimates that a total detonation could compare to a 10-kiloton nuclear bomb, equivalent to the one at Hiroshima.³⁸

An incident like that would not only cause severe problems in Moldova but also in Ukraine, as Cobasna is located only 2 kilometers away from Ukraine’s border. This depot is the main reason

³⁷ Supreme Council of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic. “Results of the Work Summarized.” <https://en.vspmr.org/news/supreme-council/podvedeni-itogi-raboti.html>

³⁸ Arnika. “The Largest Illegal Arms Depot in Eastern Europe.” <https://arnika.org/en/hotspots/moldova/the-largest-illegal-arms-depot-in-eastern-europe>

that the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGFR) of around 1,500 troops remains in Moldova and refuses to leave.³⁹



40

After the second day of the media possession, the MGB used its counter-terrorism authority to seize control of governmental buildings, effectively taking over the capital. Tactical units took over the main telecommunication hub in Tiraspol and the electrical substation and cut off all internet and phone lines. The President, along with other high-ranking officials, was placed under house arrest at a secure facility in a location unknown to the public. On the 21st of October 2026, 4 days after the coup, a series of small explosions was noted in the perimeter of the Cobasna ammunition depot. Immediately after the explosions, the interim “MGB governing committee” claimed that NATO-backed saboteurs had attempted to detonate the 20,000 tons of explosive

³⁹ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “The Transnistria Crisis and Moldova’s European Future.” October 23, 2025. <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2025/10/moldova-transnistria-crisis>.

⁴⁰ Sky News. “Moldova: Attacks in Contested Region of Transnistria Raise Fears of Ukraine War Spreading over the Border.” April 27, 2022. <https://news.sky.com/story/moldova-attacks-in-contested-region-of-transnistria-raise-fears-of-ukraine-war-spreading-over-the-border-12600703>

and, invoking their “security pact” with Russia, they requested immediate backup.

In a matter of hours, the Russian military forces began arriving in Tiraspol. More specifically Ilyushin Il-76 transport planes started landing at the Tiraspol military airfield. These planes were transporting elite VDV paratroopers⁴¹ who were branded as “Special Protection Forces for the Cobasna Depot”. Along with the paratroopers, a large amount of heavy military equipment was also detected, but remains unidentified. By the next day, Tiraspol was fully militarized and run by Russian commanders. The “frozen conflict” was officially dead.

As Moldova’s neighbor, Romania was alerted by the militarization of Tiraspol. The Russian presence poses an immediate and direct threat to Romanian Security. That is why Romania invoked Article 4 of the Washington Treaty and due to the magnitude of the threat, instead of an ambassador-level meeting, an extraordinary summit with heads of state was called.

7. Conclusion

Taking everything into consideration, it is evident that the situation in Transnistria is highly urgent. After the invasion of Ukraine, the militarization of Transnistria is Russia’s most aggressive act towards the West. As heads of state of the Allied nations, you must navigate through the complex geopolitical tensions that pose a threat to Allied territory. Remaining loyal to NATO principles and with the legal basis of the Washington Treaty, you must counter this “existential emergency” which, if mishandled, could lead to an invocation of Article 5.

⁴¹ Jörgen, Elfving. "Russian Airborne Troops: Roles and Capabilities." *The Jamestown Foundation*, April 2021. <https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Jorgen-Russian-Airborne-Troops.pdf>

8. Points to be Addressed

1. What specific military "deterrence" measures can NATO deploy to the Romanian-Moldovan border to prevent the conflict from spilling into Allied territory?
2. How can NATO effectively debunk the MGB's claims that the explosions at Cobasna were caused by "NATO-backed saboteurs"?
3. In what specific ways can NATO support Moldova as a partner to reclaim its essential state functions by mitigating its strategic energy dependence on the Cuciurgan power plant?
4. How can the Alliance ensure that technical support to Moldova is provided in order to ensure protection of state-critical data against hybrid attacks?
5. How can the StratCom Office of NATO effectively debunk enemy propaganda and promote NATO's narrative in the Allied population?

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