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Scarcity & the EU Resilience-Building Capacity in Moldova by Stabilizing the Transnistrian Conflict*

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Abstract

Resilience-building within the EU borders is critical to ensure the security of European states. Moldova is one of the target areas for this policy due to the frozen Transnistrian conflict. The primary purpose of this article is analyzing the role of the EU in the Transnistrian conflict and why the EU resilience building activities had limited effects on the ground. The theoretical framework of this study is Mullainathan and Shafer's idea of Scarcity. Scarcity is a broad concept that means "having less than you need." The EU security scarcity has led to a security poverty. Scarcity's capture of attention affects not only what the EU sees the world, but also the way in which it interprets and understands it. This article hypothesizes that the EU has started tunneling due to the security scarcity for resilience-building in the Transnistrian conflict, and this has led to a decrease in the bandwidth and consequently diminished the resilience-building capacity and conflict resolution in the region. The method of research is case study.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, EU, Moldova, Resilience-Building, Scarcity, Transnistria

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1. Introduction

Moldova is a small country in Eastern Europe, located between Ukraine and Romania. On September 2, 1990, Transnistria decided to secede from Moldova. The violent phase of the conflict lasted almost five months, leading to Russian intervention through the Fourteenth Army. The roots of the Transnistria conflict are related to different historical experiences of the two parts of the country. Moldova belongs to the historical and cultural sphere of Bessarabia, which included the region between the Prut and Dniester rivers, but Transnistria was outside that. Transnistria is more influenced by the Soviet historical experience. On the other hand, due to the influence of political culture on historical background, Transnistria elites' tendency has been towards Russia and the Moldovan direction towards the West. Thus, the gap between political elites has also had an impact on this conflict.

Osipov and Vasilevich (2017) assume that the most important factors in the Transnistria conflict consist of internal support from the local population, which is achieved through propaganda and identity building (not ethnical), strong defense capabilities vis-à-vis relative military and economic weakness of the parent state, support of a healthy patron state, and limited or inconsistent involvement of the international community.

The history of EU-Moldova relations dates back to 1994 and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the two sides. In 2005, with the signing of the Action Plan (AP), the relations between them expanded, covering important issues such as the matter of Transnistria. In 2014, the EU and Moldova signed the Association Agreement (AA), which was a step towards advancing the EU's policy of creating a secure environment and a visa liberalization policy. All documents related to Moldova

mention the issue of Transnistria: cooperation with the authorities of both parties on the one hand, and civil society on the other hand are massively emphasized. The EU has therefore considered a policy of resilience-building in all documents related to the EU-Moldova relations.

Resilience is one of the top five priorities of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS). Resilience refers to the capacity to absorb and recover from any type of stress or shock. In the EU's neighboring countries, it is understood to be the capacity of states to withstand and absorb shocks, as well as recover from them (Missiroli, 2017, p. 12). Resilience-building is the ability of governments to organize challenges and save them from adversity. For various security, geopolitical, and identity reasons, resilience-building in Moldova is essential for the EU; it supports the resilience building for the following reasons:

- To ensure stability and avoid violent conflict.
- To compete with Russia.
- To assist the excellent governance in Moldova.
- To spread the normative power of the EU.

Since 2005, 5 + 2 talks (Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, Transnistria, and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) + EU and USA) have begun to resolve the conflict. In 2005, Moldova called for a change in the EU's position on mediation in the negotiations, approved by the EU envoy to Chisinau. After a careful examination of the academic literature, it seems that in practice, the European Union has many doubts and disagreements among members about the Transnistrian conflict (see Bosse, 2010; Delcour, 2015; Kenedy, 2019). As a result, the

EU has moved towards a more secure, but less profitable and inefficient policy:

Restrictions on domestic resources + International limitations = scarcity mindset

The assumption of the failure of EU policies in the process of stabilization of the Transnistrian conflict stems from different measures:

- The Russian influence in the Transnistrian region and the EU's policy depend on Russia's acceptance of the EU solution and intermediary role in the conflict.
- The blurred picture of the EU among the Moldovan people due to the lack of the effectiveness of its policies.
- Lack of cross-party consensus for a settlement due to resource deficits.
- The inaction of the European Union in the 5 + 2 negotiations due to the non-acceptance of the European acting by Tiraspol and EU capacity building deficit.

The issue of the failure of the EU in the stabilization of the Transnistrian conflict have been studied from various perspectives; however, the innovation of the present article is that it uses the theory of scarcity in the field of behavioral economics to examine this issue and seeks to answer the following question: What effect has scarcity had on the EU's failure to resilience-building in Moldova during the Transnistrian conflict?

Scarcity is a versatile concept and its application to the issue of Transnistria is rather innovative. It allows researchers to go beyond the usual articulation of EU constraints on the stabilization process in Transnistria and changes the way in which we examine the question of security. The concept of scarcity emphasizes the notion of choice: intervention in the Transnistria conflict was neither

Europe's choice, nor priority; Europe did not understand the need for this conflict and saw it as a double burden. In complex environments, where critical decisions need to be made, governmental stumble is likely to occur due to the use of an inappropriate evaluation model. The government weakness in making decisions is referred to the mindset structure of the actors.

The central hypothesis is that the EU started tunneling in the case of the Transnistria conflict that because of its security scarcity. This has reduced the bandwidth and, as a result, the ability to resolve the dispute in this area. To test this hypothesis, Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir's theory of the scarcity (2013) has been used.

The official position of the EU insists on continuing the negotiations, while staying out of the formal process of the talks. Nevertheless, the EU's efforts in this area have never been enough. Although the EU's policy of expanding relations and performing certain reforms in Moldova has been successful, the state of democracy in the country remains fragile. The EU's focus is more on technical and economic assistance, while resilience-building requires more political will and commitment. In other words, while resolving conflict and resilience-building is part of high politics, the EU institutions prefer to use low politics tools in this issue. ENP, for example, meant pushing for a solution to the Transnistrian conflict through indirect means, such as encouraging good governance. Europe could have taken a more dynamic approach in this area.

Furthermore, the EU's resilience-building mechanism in Moldova has been formed in the absence of active cooperation between member states and under Russian pressure. The EU

governments are divided on the relations with Russia & Eastern Europe. The process of resilience-building in Moldova has therefore reached a deadlock, as the EU policies on the conflict are still in limbo.

1.1. Literature Review

Today, the issue of resilience-building is critical in academic literature, especially since the EU places great emphasis on this in its disputed areas. In this regard, and in connection with the process of resilience-building in Moldova, we can identify the existing literature around the two available axes:

- Works that generally examine the policies of the EU in Moldova.
- Works that entirely focus on the EU process of resilience-building in Moldova by resolving the Transnistria conflict.

1.1.1. The EU Policy in Moldova

Most of the published works on this subject are based on the theory of foreign governance such as, Crombois (2019), Lippert (2019), Christou (2012), Emerson (2019), and Baltag and Bosse (2016). Focusing on the political dimension of cooperation, Giselle Bosse (2010) examines the overall relationship between the EU and Moldova in the light of the implementation of ENP. Bosse has blurred the EU's restrictions. She highlights the notions of governance and partnership and argues that EU's external governance means rule transfer, but it is blind to the possibility of alternative approaches. She believes that Moldova hesitates regarding the approximation of its laws to the EU norms.

Numerous academic works, such as Lavrelashvili (2018) and Popescu (2005a), have examined Moldova's position in EU foreign policy alongside Georgia and Ukraine, as there are similarities between these countries in terms of their level of cooperation.

Beyond the political dimension, Verdun and Chira (2008) argue that European laws in EaP member states have led to a greater intersection of these countries with European-oriented norms and values. The focus of this article is on the dimension of standard convergence and legislation. The authors see this trend as a sign of near/future membership of these countries in the EU. The main indexes of this article are laws, legal institutions, and legal procedures. They conclude that this convergence trend is in many ways similar to the Copenhagen criteria that include: incorporate the *acquis*, create a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU, and the stability of institutions guarantying democracy. Unfortunately, this strategy accompanies a lack of EU commitment to Moldova's accession (an issue that has ultimately discouraged the country).

Likewise, the latter group emphasizes Russia's deterrent role in EU-Moldova relations. The research conducted by Delcour (2017), Fogarty (2010), Delcour and De Wekker (2017), Staeger (2017) Schmidtke and Yekelchik (2008) fall in this category. Laverlashvili's article (2018) examines the dimensions of the issue of stabilization in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia. The author argues that the EU conducts the same policy in these countries. However, the common threat to stabilization for them is the Russian Federation. She suggests that strengthening the convergence of the EU and these countries could lead to the strengthening of the Europhile parties in these countries and reduce

the power of the Russophile parties, and consequently move towards more excellent stability. In this regard, Hagemann (2013), examines the trilogy of Russia, Moldova, and the EU. In the light of these research, this study intends to describe the methods of domestic change induced by influences from the international level. The internal change desired by the author is the same as the change in the regulations. Hagemann found that a high level of legalization, conditionality, low domestic adoption, and costs transfer lead to a change of rules in Moldova. Tudoroiu (2012) describes the Transnistria frozen conflict as a critical element of the developing regional duel between Russia and the EU. He tries to predict the future development of the Transnistrian conflict as well as its regional implications, and argues that the crisis has to be scrutinized at the regional level, rather than the local level, since Transnistria is not an isolated case.

1. 1. 2. The Role of EU in the Transnistrian Conflict

The second category of academic works directly deals with EU's role in Transnistria and the process of conflict resolution in Moldova. One of the most comprehensive works on the issue of resilience-building and peace-building in Transnistria is a book published by De Waal (2020). The book considers the issue of Transnistria to be a frozen conflict and examines it alongside the conflicts of Donbas, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. The book's view is geopolitical, maneuvering on Russia's deterrent role in undermining resilience-building and peace-building in a frozen conflict. Other books that refer to the Transnistrian conflict as a frozen conflict include the works of Petrovicka and Wunsch (2010), Calus (2015), and Hill (2012). Hill (2012) places this case in an extended context of Russian-EU

interaction in the Balkan. He stresses great differences between OSCE states, and believes that the EU approach suffers from a lack of focus on specific factors shaping Russia's foreign policy.

Another valuable research in this area is Kennedy's (2016) article, in which he discusses EU and NATO's failure in resolving the Transnistrian conflict in the context of delicate balancing limitations. He defines soft balance as "A logical strategy for stronger actors when the conflict is not as salient as for the weaker actor" (Kennedy, 2016, p. 512). The main emphasis of his paper is to limit the balance between the two institutions with Russia. He devotes three indicators for this: institutional binding (use of multilateral institution), creation of alternative alignments or ententes to balance a more vital state in the form of informal and formal partnership, and economic statecraft (Kennedy, 2016, p. 514). However, according to the theory of scarcity, Russia itself is considered a constraint, not part of a constraint process. On the other hand, Kennedy pays more attention to Western institutions and presents them as "another" against Russia. The author of the present article, however, believes that this other-oriented approach can be harmful.

Other publications focus more on the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova, and Ukraine (EUBAM). EUBAM's mission is emphasized in the works of Popescu (2005a), Crombois (2010), and Laura Delcour (2015). Crombois (2010) argues that EUBAM reflects the specificity of EaP in Moldova, but the EU has used civilian Instruments. Having said that EUBAM reflects the lack of established practices between the different existing institutional frameworks, he stresses the role of Russia in determining both the scope and the ambitions of success (Crombois, 2019).

Another group of researchers emphasize the role of governance in the process of resilience-building in Transnistria. Elena Korosteleva (2010) examines the relationship between the EU and the region from the perspective of foreign governance. She assumes that the political instability in Moldova, which began in 2009 (a coalition of liberal parties called Alliance for European Integration, who came to power in Moldova) has disrupted the process of reform and Europeanization. To address this issue, Korosteleva goes beyond the theory of classical governance and defines borders as another by considering artificial boundaries. She argues that the problems created by the border challenge, geopolitically and culturally, placed Moldova on a separate island from the outside world. This article is highly innovative and explores the issue in a multifaceted approach. Schöppner (2020) argues that the EU is an external actor with external action in Transnistria, which analyzes and responds to the conflict in a top-down manner. On the one hand, it offers a unique and tested internal mechanism and on the other hand, it proposes enticing values built on human right advocacy. As a result, there remains little space for the EU to act as a real conflict resolution (Schöppner, 2020).

In addition, the weakness of internal governance in Moldova has been repeatedly cited as an influential indicator of the Transnistria conflict. Küchler (2012) and Montesano et al. (2016) argue that government influence and oligarchic control in Moldova have made the trans-confidence process more difficult. The ruling elites are also unable to reform. Cenusă (2019) believes that competition between the oligarchic class in Moldova and Transnistria on the one hand, and over-emphasis on geopolitical interests and ignoring ethnic tensions on the other hand, are the main reasons for the continuing bar in resilience-building. Furthermore, the oligarchic

groups do not strictly respect the plan's structure. The projects financed by the ENI are not proactive and have been launched after the crisis occurred. Until the oligarchic influences are constrained, resilience building in Moldova is at risk.

Proponents of normative approaches are also common in the Transnistria analysis. Vahl (2005), as well as Niemann and DE Wekker (2010) examine the normative policies of the EU in Transnistria, and argue that the EU has the potentiality to exert normative influence on Moldova. Likewise, they ask how the EU has a normative approach to resolving the Transnistrian conflict. The authors found that the normative power of Europe works as a mediating variable between Europe and Moldova. They utilize three indicators for investigating the European normative influence: normative purposes, normative trend, and normative effect. According to them, the most crucial intentions of Europe are to promote democracy and good governance, the most essential normative movement is the process of resilience-building with the EU, and the most important normative effect is to change the norms in the region. Earlier, in a joint statement with Emerson, Vahl (2004) emphasized the normative dimension of the EU policy and the adoption of a European approach to the resilience-building process in Transnistria. Dura (2011) also addresses the issue by emphasizing the role of civil society in the process of resilience-building and peace-making.

1. 2. Theoretical Approach and Research Method

As indicated in the previous section, Transnistria and the process of resilience-building in Moldova have been studied from various dimensions. The EU's goal in implementing the EaP and deepening

relations with Moldova is to stabilize its surroundings. If security is considered a commodity, resilience-building and resolving the surrounding conflicts can be regarded as smaller goals for achieving the main goal. In other words, the EU intends to pursue a policy of security in its eastern neighbor (particularly Moldova, which is the subject of our discussion) by following a policy of EaP and other institutional tools. If we consider this resilience-building process a game, the first stage of which begins with the conclusion of a cooperation agreement with Moldova, in the middle stages, we will reach the issue of Transnistria and the need for confidence-building in this region.

In the meantime, there is a severe obstacle to the EU in achieving this goal, which is scarcity. Since World War II, Europe has always relied on the United States to ensure continental safety. As a result, Europe's lack of security has led to the failure of resilience-building policies on its eastern borders.

The dominant literature in the field of EU interactions with Eastern European countries has also often matured in functionalist theories' dominance. Finding a new idea to analyze this issue in behavioral economics can be a challenge, because the core of these classical theories has always been a rational choice; however, Behavioral economists have found that human behavior is much more complicated. This finding can also be generalized to governments and add several new considerations into the analysis of international politics issues:

- Governments generally do not like change and choose the default options when making decisions, rather than the most useful ones.
- Governments prefer to avoid loss, rather than enjoy winning.

- Governments are always optimistic about the outcome of their decisions and value mental evidence.
- Governments often procrastinate, especially if enacting the right action, which takes a significant amount of effort.

One of the fascinating theories proposed by behavioral economics is the scarcity theory of Sendhil Mullainathan & Eldar Shafir in 2013. In their view, Scarcity is the kind of subjective outrage, in which Man does not want more than what he has; Because his intellectual order has not been formed in this direction. This is the result of a feeling in which one does not have enough of something. In short, we can say that scarcity means having less than you need (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 4). The theory of scarcity indicates that there is a gap between consciousness and movement on the one hand, and the intention to perform action and action itself on the other hand. The mind is attracted to scarcity and scarcity forces people to make decisions.

In the meantime, deadlines have a considerable impact on these choices, because deadlines cause scarcity and therefore mental focus. In deadlines, the smallest objects look substantial, and as a result, efficiency increases (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 25).

Here the second concept of our theory (tunneling) takes shape that means a one-dimensional focus on poor management. When one enters the tunnel, one sees the objects inside the tunnel, whereas the objects outside are not visible (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 31). Tunneling is the term used to indicate the flipside of focus. Decisions made inside the tunnel may not consider all available options. In the face of the Transnistria Crisis, the EU chose between the two options of changing the status quo and actively participating and maintaining the status quo (policy of

slow change) and passive presence. This was due to other security deadlines in the region: Russia and other active conflicts, such as the Ukraine conflict.

Tunneling is a deterrent to other concepts. The EU's over-dependence on Russia's energy resources, Ukraine's role model, and fear of its recurrence, and its emphasis on mere diplomatic means all play a deterrent role. When Europe defines the two criteria of the rule of law and the promotion of democracy as its main objectives and tools, this will cause other options to be subconsciously ignored. This is the process to which psychologists refer as inhibition (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 33). In other words, in the Transnistria conflict, the Europeans focus only on one short-term goal: they do not want another conflict on their borders at any cost. Therefore, they prefer to tiptoe around this. The escalation of the conflict will create crises such as floods of migrants and asylum seekers.

Scarcity through tunneling reduces bandwidth, which is the third concept in our theory. In economics, when a crisis begins, the consumer seeks to change his purchasing decision and the conditions are right for the growth of new businesses. Scarcity acts in a similar manner to our mental processor. Always loading the mind with other processes, it leaves less “mind” for the task at hand. The reduction of bandwidth is a kind of nudge. It reduces the cognitive capacity to solve problems. Under scarcity, it can lead to a reduction of performance on measures of intelligence by nearly a full standard deviation. Bandwidth is a tool for measuring computational capacity and decision-making ability. This capacity is not internal. Tunneling reduces usable capacity (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, pp. 43-48).

The last concept is the lack of slack. The lack of slack leads to

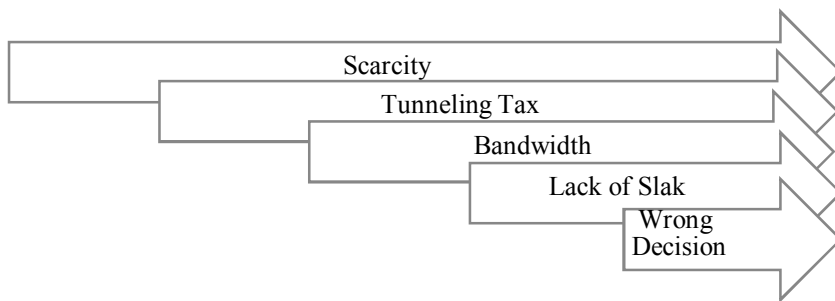
engage in conscious trade-off analysis. With scarcity, less efficient decisions create more scarcity. Scarcity not only raises the costs of error, it also provides more opportunities to make errors or misguided choices. In the situation of scarcity, it is hard to correctly perform actions, since many items—time commitments for the busy, expenses for the poor—must be carefully made to fit into a constrained budget (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 94). In this sense, the concept of slack cuts to the core of the psychology of scarcity. Having slack grants people the feeling of abundance. Slack is not just inefficiency; it is a mental luxury. Abundance does not only allow people to buy more goods. Poor people don't have those luxuries. the luxury of not having to think, as well as the luxury of not minding mistakes (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 95).

Systematically, the authors have defined a process in which scarcity turns into wrong decisions, which can be further understood as the process of poverty and the institutionalization of poverty (figure1). The purpose of this paper is to examine the EU's resilience-building process in Transnistria based on this sequence, as well as the reason for which the EU resilience building activities had limited effects on the ground

One of the innovations of this article is to change the level of analysis from micro and individual (utilized by Mullainathan and Shafir) to macro and international. Here, the difference is manifested in the issue of structure and agency. At the micro-level, the emphasis is on the agency. Agency is defined as the capacity of individuals to act independently. But at the macro level, the focus is on the structure. Of course, this article's view is not one-sided at the macro level and the structure is not a completely independent reality. Instead, the article's discussion is based on the fact that the

macro level has raised along with the micro level and a balance has formed between structure and agency. Mullainathan & Shafir believe that the mental and physical condition of individuals overshadows their social actions. If we go one step further, national and international actors are simultaneously influencing their national, regional, and international structures. The law that people are poor because of their bad decisions, can be used at the level of international relations and the rules of the game between governments and actors like EU. The authors' definition of poverty is moreover worth pondering. These authors consider poverty to be synonymous with an ever-limited budget (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 4); a statement that still applies to the European security poverty.

Figure1. Theoretical Approach



Source: Author

The method of research is based on case study. The case study is a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis; i.e., the characterization of the case and the events, as well as a description of the discovery process of these features, which is the

process of research itself (Starman, 2013, p. 31). To be able to debate a case study, it has to be defined within an analytical framework or object in the constitution of the study, for that, the scarcity is seen as an object.

In this research, the Transnistria conflict has been chosen as a case study to understand the concept of scarcity in the foreign policy of the European Union. The case study is a suitable method for the present study because the proposed research addresses a contemporary phenomenon, which the researcher has no control over; the research is largely exploratory; and it addresses the "how" and "why" questions. A case study is an appropriate research design when we want to gain concrete, contextual, in-depth knowledge about a specific real-world subject. It allows us to explore the key characteristics, meanings, and implications of the case. Due to the new application of the theoretical framework derived from behavioral economics, the best method for a better understanding of the theory in international relations was the selection of a case study.

2. Europe's Security Scarcity

The issue of insecurity refers to a security scarcity. Any phenomenon or event that leads to fragile security, reduces the budget of a political institution. This decrease manifests itself in the various dimensions of financial, credit, prestige, and acting power. Security scarcity results from the specific cultural, historical, economic, and political circumstances of an actor. It should be noted that this concept in Mullainathan & Shafir's theory goes far beyond what economics emphasizes, which can be seen in the Transnistria case.

One of the most important unresolved issues in Moldova is the Transnistria conflict. Transnistria has a separate flag, currency, police force, government, and independent parliament. Unlike other parts of Moldova, it has never been part of the Bessarabia region, and as a result, its demographic composition differs from that of Moldova. The language spoken in Transnistria is similar to Russian (VanSeeters, 2010, p. 41). Many Russians and Ukrainians settled in Transnistria in the Soviet period. The democratic ideas put forward in Perestroika politics led to the strengthening of the Moldovan connection with Romania and the change of language to Romanian. As a result, most Russian speakers in Transnistria took a stand against the idea of a Single Moldovan¹(based on the Bessarabia heritage) and became closer to their Russian identity (Zimmerly, 2009; Dembinska & Campana, 2017, p. 261).

The situation of Transnistria is a frozen conflict. That is, the military conflict is over; nonetheless there is no peace treaty or other forms of conflict resolution. Therefore, legally, this conflict can be exposed to a complete conflict at any time by the insecurity of the environment or any unstable factor (Zimmerly, 2009). This doubles the importance of resilience-building for Europe. The central policy of the EU was to change the political, social, and economic structure of Moldova to peaceful resilience-building. In the first place, Moldova invited the EU to intervene, and then, the EU took the initiative to enter the game (Vahl, 2005, p. 2). The EU's role in Transnistria was according to the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). In 2003, the EU monitored the Joint Constitutional Commission. This was the first time the EU entered into negotiations to resolve the conflict in Transnistria, although

¹ After the fall of the Soviet Union, many thought that Moldova would automatically join Romania, but this did not happen.

this process was not successful. Following Moldova's accession to the ENP in 2004 and AA's signing in February 2005, the EU became more interested in the Transnistria conflict. The EUSR had three main tasks: multilateral diplomacy, mediation, and EU representation in Moldova. Nevertheless, two important security considerations have severely overshadowed the EU's capacity in the Transnistria resilience-building process and have led to scarcity: Russia and the divisions between member states over the need for the EU intervention.

The first European problem was Russia. At the 2005 Moscow Summit, a roadmap for four common areas between Brussels and Moscow was adopted. Notwithstanding, Russia and the EU did not put Transnistria on the agenda during the summit (Niemann & De Wekker, 2010, p. 14). Russia's solution was to drive Transnistria into federalism to prevent Moldova from moving west. From Russia's point of view, the three autonomous regions of Transnistria, Moldova, and Gagauzia¹ should be formed (Calus, 2015, p. 1). A clear example of this was the Kozak Memorandum. The conflict resolution plan, which was unilaterally drafted by Russia in November 2003, paved the way for Russia's military presence in Transnistria until 2020. With this, the Russians will maintain the two regions of Transnistria and Gagauzia on their side and can keep Chisinau away from Europe.

1. The Gagauzia region is made up of Orthodox Christian Turkic denominations. They speak Oguz Turkish. They tend more towards Russia than the European Union. There are some tensions between the central government and the Gagauzia Autonomous Region, mainly due to a lack of transparency in relations. In February 2014, a referendum was held in Gagauzia on popular preference for Moldovan foreign policy. The majority voted in favor of convergence with Russia. Of course, Chisinau called the referendum illegal.

With the intervention of the EU High Representative Javier Solana, the program was rejected by Vladimir Vornin in Moldova (Popescu, 2005b, p. 5) and Tiraspol was not recognized by Russia. This is because the plan to form a federation is valid as long as Transnistria, at least in the form of *de jure*, is part of Moldova (Calus, 2015, p. 2). Russia is currently influencing Transnistria in three ways:

- Financial aid to separatists: The Transnistrian industry has been backed by Russian subsidies for years. Transnistria has a corrupted economy, Therefore, except Russia, no country, wants to invest in the region (Montesano et al., 2016, p. 16). Gazprom has also exported large volumes of its gas to the region without payment. In 2019, the total debt of Transnistria to Gazprom was around \$ 6 billion (Infotag, 2019).
- Social protection: Russia provides its social support to all inhabitants of Transnistria (Karniewicz et al., 2010, p. 4). Russia's most crucial direct aid, including assistance to pensioners in Putinka's policy since 2008 and Russia's development aid since 2012 was around \$ 70 million (De Waal, 2020, p. 149). The other soft power of Russia was the emphasis on the common heritage of the Orthodox Church and the Soviet identity (Gromadzki & Wilk, 2001, p. 18). Although all of this has strained Russia's relations with Moldova, its presence in Transnistria has strengthened.
- Military presence: In addition to soft power, the Russians have implemented hard power in the Transnistrian region. The Russian military is still present in the area as a peacekeeping operation. Russia keeps in Transnistria about 1,500 soldiers within two formations. About a third of them are peacekeepers, and two-thirds of the Operational Group of *Russian Forces* in

Transnistria (OGRF) army, which is a remnant of the Russian 14th Army (DeWaal, 2020, p. 138).

As is clear, the Russian Manifesto is the combination of hard and soft power, but the European Manifesto stresses only on soft power. This is the reason for which Europeans have always been one step behind in such conflicts. At the same time, Russia had the weapons to put pressure on Europe. Europe's dependence on Russian energy has provided a powerful tool for this dilemma. Establishing a good relationship with Russia is more important for the EU than resolving the Transnistria conflict. Some European countries, particularly Germany, are afraid of sensitizing Russia. Consequently, this weakness has prevented the EU from pursuing a severe resilience-building policy.

Beyond Russia's problem, we must point to Europe's internal shortcomings. Therefore, the second limiting factor for the EU is the lack of consensus among member states. Some countries, such as the Baltic states, are less willing to take risks on their security (Lavrelashvili, 2018, p. 192). Furthermore, Europe lacks the military power to intervene. Resilience-building has three essential aspects: preparation, recovery, and adoption. Although the EU has limited resources, it is ready to provide technical and financial assistance (Lavrelashvili, 2018, p. 193). This means that the EU's efficiency cannot be at the current stage, but at the post-conflict recovery stage. While countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Poland are interested in the eastern wing of the ENP, other countries, such as Italy and France, prefer the Mediterranean wing. The different security concerns of member states play an essential role in the imbalance and inadequate allocation of time and financial resources to the process of resilience-building. Even among the eastern member states of the Union, there is an intense

fear of the shadow of communist heritage and Russia, which will lead to conservative actions in this regard. This explains the reason for which these countries do not wish to twist with the lion's tail. To give an illustration, some of the EU's larger parties, such as The European People Party and their affiliates, have provided extensive support for resilience-building in Transnistria (Lavrelashvili, 2018, p. 194). The EU's mission in Transnistria could have included elements of peacebuilding and governance; however, this requires funding from member states (Huff, 2011, p. 30), which at least until the near future, appears unlikely.

The scarcity causes vital work to be overlooked, and the cost of doing immediate work is magnified. This way of thinking resembles that of borrowing, which one buys time to postpone the cost to the future (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 116). This is precisely what Europeans are doing to resilience-building in Transnistria. They prioritize maintaining Russia and all member states satisfied (as an urgent matter), which is not wrong; nonetheless, they are postponing the Transnistria conflict as an unurgent matter, which would be costly for them in the future.

3. Tunneling and Bandwidth Tax in Transnistria

Scarcity directly reduces bandwidth—not a person's inherent capacity but how much of that capacity is currently available for use (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 54). The same is true in politics. During the conflict, Moldova and Transnistria were in a state of political and economic crisis. They were looking for a new option, which was never the EU intervention for Tiraspol. By contrast, in Chisinau's view, Europe was the best option, especially after the Alliance for European Integration came to power in 2009.

The EU has always been like a new business that has no attractive tools in the political market to change the taste of Tiraspol. The benefits of marketing are similar to those that are overlooked when entering a tunnel. All European attention was focused on the two options mentioned above and failed to do proper marketing. The EU's restriction on hard power led to the failure of resilience-building. Europeans appear to have no sense of competition in these areas. The reason for this is the lack of hardware tools, rather than an unwillingness to utilize them, which, as mentioned earlier, sets the Russians apart. In other words, the Europeans have tunneled over soft power.

Europe's first soft power tool was diplomatic efforts, which were not highly successful. Moscow unilaterally negotiated the 1992 ceasefire; however, political talks have been in place at an international level since 1993. With the entry of the EU and the United States, the 5 + 2 talks began in 2005. To this date, insignificant progress has been made in resilience-building under this framework, as Transnistria leaders are more inclined to maintain the status quo. However, their goal differs from that of the EU. The 5 + 2 talks revolved around three axes: the socio-economic axis, the legal axis, and the axis of the complete settlement of the conflict in institutional, political, and security dimensions (Ivan, 2014, p. 3). Russia has repeatedly sought to weaken the OSCE, which has reduced Europe's real influence in the negotiations.

Advances have been made since 2016 with the implementation of the 8-pack resilience and convergence tools provided by the OSCE. This is a top-down approach based on de facto convergence. The package was approved during the German presidency of the OSCE and included items such as recognition of

diplomas issued by Transnistria in Moldova, Transnistrian vehicle with neutral license plate travel to international road traffic, convergence in the telecommunications market, environmental standards act on the Denister river, monitoring the crimes committed by the citizens of each region in another region, Moldovan language teaching with Latin script in Transnistria schools, ensuring access for Moldovan farmers to Dubasari agricultural land in Transnistria, and finally the reopening of the Gura Bîcului-Bîcioc Bridge, which had been closed since 1992 (DeWaal, 2020, p. 145).

The second European tool was EUBAM. In 2005, following a joint request from Moldova and Ukraine for training and assistance to the two countries' authorities for establishing a common and effective border control, the EUBAM program was defined (Vahl, 2005, p. 3). This operation was defined under *European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI)* indicators and the Commission was involved in the process. More than 20 EU member states and 200 European staff took part in the process. The objectives of the EUBAM were:

- To contribute to the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict by supporting the development of Transnistria-related confidence-building measures and the approximation of legislation and procedures in customs, trade, transport, and trans-boundary management;
- To ensure the full implementation of Integrated Border Management (IBM) practices at the Moldova-Ukraine border;
- To assist the Moldovan and Ukrainian authorities to combat cross-border crime more effectively (EUEA, 2023).

At the end of 2005, the prime ministers of Moldova and Ukraine

signed a Joint Declaration on the practical implementation of the customs regime on their common borders to combat illegal trade in Transnistria. Kemoklidze and Wolff (2019), emphasize the trade variable as an essential tool for confidence-building. They argue that some trade relations have greater potential for stabilization and engagement on further trade facilitation (Kemoklidze & Wolff, 2020, pp. 305-322). The Joint Declaration is not a new agreement. By contrast, it is a re-implementation of the 2003 customs agreements that were not implemented by Ukraine. In the 2003 agreement, Ukraine pledged to allow only those Transnistria's goods to cross the border with Moldovan customs' seal. In the form of the Joint Declaration, Transnistria enjoyed a preferential business system, including lower tariffs and the elimination of individual taxes on export goods, or in other words, Autonomous Trade Preferences (Prohnițchi & Lupușor, 2013, p. 17). EUBAM led to 50% growth in Transnistria's exports to the EU; however, it did not fully carry out resilience-building in the region. After the suspension period (2006-2011), negotiations for a solution to the conflict resumed in Transnistria. Relitz (2019) claims that the global community, including the EU, seeks to stabilize conflicts between de facto states and their parent states through global engagement (at the same time, the IC supports the stabilization of the international system through the reintegration of separatist entities into their parent states).

EU's third soft policy on stabilization in Transnistria was to promote trade and economic incentives, which are a turning point in the EU policy after the sanctions were lifted. Moldova welcomed the implementation of EU's financial package, which aimed to be closer to Transnistria. Trade plays an essential role in the Transnistria economy. Tiraspol relies heavily on exports to finance

its budget. Due to the lack of international identification of Transnistria, the country's products must be stamped with Moldovan customs to enter the international market legally. Despite this, this policy was effective in darkening the relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol. This was exacerbated by Moldova's membership in the WTO. According to an agreement signed in 2003, Transnistrian companies needed to register in Chisinau and only then could they clear their commodities in Moldovan custom offices. Moldova revoked custom stamps used by Transnistria in 2001. This meant that these companies were obligated to bear extra costs.

Commercially, Transnistria, like Moldova, is prone to the West, which is called the focus dividend; the European marketing has therefore been successful in shaping the country's economic inclination. Nonetheless, Europe is still trapped in the case of Transnistria. Mullainathan & Shafir assume that scarcity causes over-concentration. They believe that the function of spontaneity is inversely related to a U-curve. The elimination of scarcity requires a plan. Notably, the mentality full of scarcity is frequently wrong (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 133). Europe appears to be struggling to save its foreign policy only in the vortex of scarcity. Its high incentive to increase economic cooperation with Tiraspol will only reduce its performance, because this policy will only increase the corruption in this region, which is not the most practical solution for the elimination of scarcity.

The EU's latest soft tool for resilience-building in Transnistria is increasing public relations or civil society development. The EU's most important tool for communicating with civil society is Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), which seeks to strengthen cooperation between non-governmental organizations, the business

community, the media, and other civil organizations on both sides of the Dniester River. These criteria include three goals: health, environmental protection, and social infrastructure (Montesano et al., 2016, p. 18). According to these criteria, the EU is rebuilding hospitals, improving school conditions, ensuring access to sanitation, and improving road infrastructure. From 2009 to 2014, these criteria, in combination with UNDP, provided a \$13.2 billion budget for the Confidence Building Measures program that targeted Moldova and Transnistria (Montesano et al., 2016, p. 18). The EU has allocated about €30 million for this policy. The Transnistrian civil society is fragile (Dura, 2011, p. 9), and political isolation has further limited NGOs. This also negatively affects the country's access to external resources and makes their activities illegal, since as indicated earlier, the region has not been recognized internationally (Dura, 2011, p. 10). The EU failure has occurred because of tunneling tax, slashes its stabilizing sources into a weak policy. The EU, in lean times, makes the mistake of cutting its ENI priorities, but lean times are precisely the times that the EU needs to show itself.

Mullainathan & Shafir suggested that the trap of this policy is to enter the juggling crisis, which means continuous movement from one task to another. When we tunnel, we solve issues temporarily. We do what we can do in the present, which causes other problems in the future (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 129). The question that Europeans have to answer is whether investing in such policies is in line with the Transnistrian society's realities. This policy is the only product of a deficient mind. When a person is on the narrow edge of scarcity, any hesitation can be a significant threat. That is, if there is a lack of slack, scarcity may be repeated (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 137).

4. The Lack of Slack in the Transnistrian Conflict

To survive the scarcity, we need to have plenty of space to control the shock, even after the cost of procrastination. Slack allows us to feel that there is no trade-off. The issue is that scarcity originates with mistakes that one makes during periods of relative abundance. Europe has realized its negligence in its strict policies towards Tiraspol and its passive action (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, p. 139). However, relying solely on soft tools demonstrates a lack of slack for Europe. If there is enough slack, financial incentives can be created for members, or at least, Russia's energy dependence can be reduced. With more space, one can solve the problem according to the available information in case of a problem and reach an answer.

Consequently, scarcity refers to a gap between resources and goals, as well as a lack of adequate space. Permanent deficits (Calus, 2013, p. 1), low middle class, lack of international recognition, high levels of migration, and depletion of human capital (Transnistria, 2019), make the above solutions unreliable or unsuitable for resilience-building in Transnistria. The mere emphasis on short-term goals and maintaining the frozen conflict is due to being busy with other security areas and lack of slack. As indicated earlier, the Transnistria conflict is a "frozen" conflict. The term became popular in international relations literature after 1991. Underlying political, economic, military, and social dynamics may erode the stability that exists in this region, dramatically enhancing the potential for conflict (Mac Farlane, 2009, p. 26).

It seems that the EU consents to its current, frozen status, hence more aptly characterized as a "force for stability," rather than a "force for good." The frozen nature of the conflict has prevented war and violence. In addition, no terrorist threat from Transnistria

threatens Europe (Popescu, 2005b, p. 2). However, the conflict has posed many soft threats to the EU, to which it does not pay attention. As an illustration, the risk of arms, human and drug trafficking, as well as money laundering and other organized crimes have increased since the establishment of the Transnistrian state. The conflict is a significant obstacle to democratization and economic development in EaP. Therefore, not only for the benefit of the countries of the region, but also for the protection of the EU interests, a more active presence in this conflict is essential (Karniewicz et al., 2010, p. 2). The EU was concerned about stability in a more general sense, while the change of power was not seen as a potential threat to the security interests of the EU or the member states (Raik & Lupu Dinesen, 2015, p. 911).

The bandwidth tax has prevented the EU from cooperating with Russia in the region. However, this collaboration can be a pilot for close cooperation between the *Common Security and Defense Policy* (CSDP) and Russia. This is the same step defined in the Common Space of External Security on the road map of Russia and the EU (Huff, 2011, p. 30). This joint mission could legitimize the EU's presence as a security actor in its eastern neighbor and lay the groundwork for future co-operation between the two actors. Moreover, it can provide a model for resolving conflict and resilience-building in other parts of the world (Huff, 2011, p. 31). The EU-Russia talks on security issues in May 2005 provided adequate qualifications for co-operation in resolving the conflict. A vital point in the shared space was the strengthening of the EU-Russia dialogue on crisis management (Popescu, 2005a, p. 5). This space prevents Europeans from seeing a variety of solutions. The EU's stagnation has hampered the demand, and slowed the pace of resilience-building and conflict resolution.

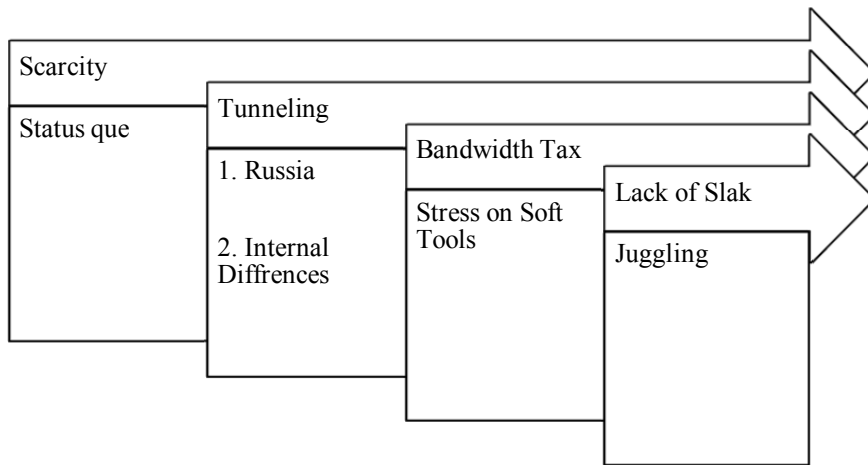
5. Conclusion

One of the most important causes of poverty is scarcity. Scarcity leads to choices and limitations in decision making. Faced with mental and physical scarcity, countries make mistakes in their calculations. The EU's option in Transnistria is to maintain the status quo due to scarcity. This has left the conflict frozen for many years. However, European officials have repeatedly stressed their desire to resolve the Transnistria conflict; the political will has not been in line with these comments. This security scarcity manifests itself in pressure from two forces in the foreign dimension (Russia) and the internal dimension (disagreements within the EU) and lead to dogmatic behaviors on behalf of Europe. The EU pretends to be massively involved currently, in a way that it cannot plan for the future. These forces have led to the tunneling of the EU in the process of resilience-building. They see half of the facts and only utilize soft tools to solve the problem. In other words, all their efforts in the direction of diplomatic activities, border management operations, expansion of economic cooperation and public contacts, as well as civil society's strengthening have matured. They have a kind of cost-benefit thinking, in which gaining one benefit (resilience-building in Transnistria) is synonymous to losing other benefits (Russian dissatisfaction and internal chaos).

Therefore, because of Europe's security scarcity, the three elements cannot combine. EU has sacrificed the third to the other two, a process that is called bandwidth tax. Because of this tax, it feels unable to control multiple variables simultaneously. Europe does not understand the need to utilize hard tools. If it leaves the tunnel, even at the cost of cooperating with Russia, it will be able to make peace and resilience in the region. The utilization of these tools indicates another factor: juggling. Due to the bandwidth tax,

Europeans are continually pushing the wrong choice and struggling to escape from this situation. Europe first attempts to resolve all the immediate security problems, and then engages in resolving non-immediate crises, such as frozen conflicts. This is due to a lack of slack. In conclusion, taking a few steps back, detaching from the present, and thinking about the future requires a broader perspective and more cognitive resources (figure 2).

Figure2. Conclusion of the Research Findings Based on the Scarcity Theory



Source: Author

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