

## TRANSNISTRIA – A CHALLENGE FOR ROMANIA

Ioan POPA\*, Luiza POPA\*\*

**Abstract.** The severe crisis which has lately marked the Russian-Ukrainian relations brought up again the so-called *Transnistrian issue*. More and more analysts, politicians, but also mere citizens living in this region or in its vicinity ask themselves what is going to happen to Transnistria in the future, as well as to the other separatist regions from the former Soviet space. In what way the conflict in Ukraine and the geopolitical and geostrategic interests lying behind it will affect the neighbouring states and the entire Europe? Different scenarios have been worked out, amid fears of rapid spreading of the separatism fever, cleverly encouraged, more or less veiled, by some leaders. Even if the consensus is lacking, one thing is sure: we are witnesses and, with or without our will, participants to major and dramatic challenges on the world scene.

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### What is Transnistria?

Narrowly, *Transnistria* (*Pridnestrovie*, in Russian language) designates today “all the territories and settlements of the Republic of Moldova on the east bank of Dniester/Nistru River”. Broadly, the historical and geographical term *Transnistria* usually means the territory between Dniester/Nistru and Bug Rivers, confined to the north by an imaginary line passing from Movilău (Mogilev) to Jmerinka, down on the Bug River to the Black Sea.

The historical sources unquestionably indicate that many Romanians have settled on Dniester/Nistru River left bank since ancient times, while the Moldavian rulers, including Ştefan cel Mare, offered their subjects land in this free zone, without any restraint. To 1400, the share of the Romanian/Moldavian population on both sides of the Dniester/Nistru was so high that it used to be considered a “*Romanian river*” (N. Iorga).

The Russian expansion reached the Dniester/Nistru River only in 1791 and 1793, long after the Romanian settlements had been founded and strengthened there. The first attempts to autonomously organize the territory on the Dniester/Nistru left side, claiming itself to be an enclave with attributes of statehood, date from the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution (October 1917)

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\* PhD., Institute of Sociology, Romanian Academy.

\*\* International expert Fund Black Sea–Caspian Sea.