CHAPTER-4
EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL SYSTEM: CONSTITUTION, POLITICAL PARTIES, PRESSURE GROUPS AND MEDIA

Introduction: The term political system may be defined as a set of formal legal institutions that comprise a government or a state. More broadly defined, it comprehends actual as well as prescribed forms of political behavior, not only the legal organization although the realities of political life. So, the political system has been seen as a set of 'process of interaction' or as a sub-system of the social system interacting with other non-political sub-systems, such as economic system. In continuation and within the theoretical framework of political system as discussed in chapter one of this thesis, the present chapter attempts to study the evolution of political system in Republic of Moldova after its independence. An attempt has been made in this chapter to explore and analyze the nature, direction and extent of change in the political system and process of Moldova. The political system in Moldova is evolving through the unsteady path where many ups and down took place after its independence. However, the reforms in politics and political system of Moldova are continuing. The Moldovan parliament declared its independence from former USSR on 27 August 1991 after the failed coup in Moscow. Mircea Snegur, former chairman of the parliament, become the president of the republic on 8 December 1991. The republic of Moldova joined the CIS in December 1991 and after one month became a member of the OSCE. In March 1992 it become a full member of the United Nations and member of the Council of Europe in June 1995. However, the process of establishing its identity as an independent sovereign state has been complicated by the presence within Moldova of two autonomy seeking regions, the self-proclaimed Dniester Moldovan Republic in the East (with its Russian and Russian-speaking minorities) and the Gagauz minority in the South of Moldova (ethnically Turkish but Orthodox Christian). One year before Moldova's declaration of independence, the two separatist regional movements rejected the official Moldovan

2 Moldovan People's Front "Reintegration" of Territory into Romania, SWB, SU/1244, 2 December 1991.
3 "Moldavian Politics", see, Online Web: http://www.historyorb.com/russia/intro.html
government and proclaimed two breakaway republics. The war between the Moldovan state and the Transnistrian rebels lasted for more than two years.\footnote{"Moldova in 1990s", see, Online Web: http://www.russiannewsnetwork.com/moldova.html}

**The Constitution of the Republic Moldova:**

The constitution of the Republic of Moldova was adopted on 29 July 1994 by the Moldovan parliament replacing the old Communist constitution of USSR's (1977). It entered into force on 27 August 1994 on the third anniversary of the independence of Moldova. It described Moldova as a “presidential, parliamentary republic” based on political pluralism and “the preservation, development and expression of ethnic and linguistic identity”, defining the state language as “Moldavan” (in fact version of Romanian). Special autonomous status was conferred on the Transdnestr and Gagauz regions. Other clauses proclaimed Moldova’s permanent neutrality and restricted the stationing of foreign troops on the national territory. According to Article 1.1 of the constitution, the Republic of Moldova is a sovereign, independent, unitary and indivisible state. The rule of law, the dignity, rights and freedoms of the people and the development of human personality, justice and political pluralism are guaranteed by the constitution. The constitution is the supreme law and it upholds the principles of human rights and freedoms, democracy and political pluralism, the separation and cooperation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers of the state, respect for international laws and treaties, fundamental principles regarding property, free economic initiative and the right to national identity. The national language of the Republic of Moldova is Moldovan and it’s writing is based on the Latin alphabet (Article 13). However, the state also acknowledges the right to use other languages spoken within the country. The constitution of Moldova also grants its citizens rights and freedoms and lays down their duties. All citizens are equal before the law; they should have free access to justice, are presumed innocent until proven guilty and have a right to an acknowledged legal status. The state guarantees fundamental human rights, such as the right to life and to physical and mental integrity, the freedoms of movement, conscience, expression, assembly and political association and the enfranchisement of Moldovan citizens aged over 18 years. Moldovan citizens have the right of access to information and education, of health
security, of establishing and joining a trade union, of working and of striking. The family, orphaned children and the disabled enjoy the protection of the state. Obligations of the citizenry include the payment of taxes and the defence of the motherland. On 28 July 2000 amendments to the constitution were enacted which transformed Moldova into a parliamentary republic. It puts most power in the hands of the parliament and limits the authority of the president. The executive power was shifted to the prime minister from the president. Thus, following the alterations to the law on presidential election procedure as approved on 22 September 2000, the president of the republic was to be elected by the legislature rather than directly.

In Moldova, laws on citizenship, voting, language, and education accommodate minorities. In practice, though occasionally uneven, the law has largely followed. Moldova was the first member of the CIS to be accepted into the Council of Europe after close scrutiny of its minority rights practices. The Russian-speaking minority has been uncomfortable with its changed status after Moldovan independence, but actual discrimination has been quite limited. Minorities have claimed discrimination because the state language law requires people in public positions to be able to deal with the public in either the state language, Moldovan or in Russian. The law itself, however, is quite accommodating to minorities in education, employment, designation of place names, and public services. Those in governmental or public employment were required by the Language Law of 1989 to learn the state language by 1994. The testing, however, required by the law has been delayed indefinitely. Moldova ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Ethnic Minorities in October 1996.

Property rights are explicitly protected in the Moldovan constitution. Law guarantees fair market price compensation for government takings of private land. A law guaranteeing the sale of land was adopted in July 1997. Nevertheless, the Gagauz Yeri region stated that the law would not be operative in that area of Moldova. The new law overturned a restrictive land code passed in 1995 and set off a campaign by the Communists to hold a

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6 For details see, Moldova Constitution, Appendix-1.
plebiscite on the issue. A majority vote of the parliament ended this attempt. Previously, the land code had been amended in February 1995 to restrict the sale of most private land until 2001. This moratorium, however, was declared unconstitutional in October 1996. Foreigners are not allowed to purchase farmland, and farmland cannot be resold within a five-year period. Moldova adopted a law protecting intellectual property rights in 1995 but has yet to successfully attack massive piracy in software and entertainment products. Establishing clear land title has been problematic.

A revision of the constitution may be initiated by one of the following: a petition signed by at least 200,000 citizens from at least one-half of the country's districts and municipalities, no less than one-third of the members of parliament, the President of the Republic and the Government. Provisions regarding the sovereignty, independence, unity and neutrality of the state may be revised only by referendum.8

President: Moldova's Head of State is the president of the republic who is elected by the legislature for a four-year term. Under constitutional arrangements prevailing at the time of the 1990 national elections, members of the Supreme Soviet elected the president, but provisions introduced in 1991 called for the president's direct election by all members of the population over eighteen years of age. However, presidential election procedure as approved on 22 September 2000, the president of the republic was to be elected by the legislature. The presidential candidate must submit the written support of a minimum of 15 parliamentarians with his or her application. He must not be less than forty years old, a resident of Moldova for at least ten years, and a speaker of the state language and must be of good health. A decision on the holding of a presidential election is taken by parliamentary resolution, and the election must be held no fewer than 45 days before the expiry of the outgoing president's term of office. To be elected president, a candidate must obtain the support of three-fifths of of the parliamentary quorum. If necessary, further ballots must then be conducted, contested by the two candidates who received the most votes. The candidate who receives more votes becomes president. The same person may hold the post of president for not more than two consecutive terms. If the president

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8 See, Moldova Constitution, Appendix-1.
has committed a criminal or constitutional offence, the votes of two-thirds of the members of parliament are required to remove the president from office. The removal must be confirmed by the Supreme Court of Justice, for a criminal offence, and by national referendum, for a constitutional offence. The president of the republic shares executive power with the Council of Ministers. The president's duties include nominating the prime minister and members of the Council of Ministers, taking part in Parliament's proceedings and debates, dissolving Parliament under certain conditions, negotiating and concluding international treaties, serving as commander in chief of the armed forces, granting political asylum, and imitating national referendums.9

Parliament: Moldova is a democracy with a unicameral legislature, the Moldovan Parliament, previously called the Supreme Soviet. Following the earlier Soviet model, the Moldovan Parliament maintains a Presidium, which performs legislative functions when the larger body is not in session. Parliament has 104 members elected by universal suffrage for a four-year term. Any citizen eligible to vote (eighteen years of age and not prohibited by law) is eligible for election to the Parliament. Parliament ordinarily meets in two sessions per year. The first session starts in February and may not go beyond the end of July. The second session starts in September and may not go beyond the end of December. Parliamentary leadership consists of a chair and two deputy chairs elected by the delegates. The work of Parliament is carried out by fifteen permanent committees, which have purview in the following areas, agriculture and rural social development, crime prevention, culture and religion, ecology, economy and the budget, foreign affairs, health and social assistance, human rights and relations among nationalities, law, legislative ethics, local administration and the local economy, public relations and the mass media, science and education, state security and military affairs, and women and family issues.10 The parliament does legislative function and is effectively organized and passes laws.

10 For details see, Online Web: http://fr.es/moldova/md02_07a.pdf/fr/d/cs/moldova/md02_07a.pdf
Council of Ministers: The Council of Ministers or cabinet headed by the prime minister and the first deputy prime minister directs the activities of the government. Candidates for the Council of Ministers are nominated by the president on the recommendation of prime minister and must be confirmed by Parliament before taking office. In 1995 there were eighteen ministries, agriculture and food, commercial services and housing, culture, defense, economy, education, finance, foreign affairs, health, industry, information and communication, interior, justice, labor and social and family protection, national security, parliamentary relations, privatization and administration of state property, and transportation and road assistance. In addition to these ministries, the government has state departments subordinate to the Council of Ministers. In 1995 there were nine state departments, architecture and construction; customs control; energy, energy resources, and fuel; environmental protection; national relations; standards, metrology, and technical assistance; statistics; trade; youth and sports.11

Local Administration: Below the central government, Moldova is divided administratively into forty raioane as in the Soviet period. Each raion is governed by a locally elected council. Raion councils elect executive committees from among their members. The heads of these executive committees are the chief executive officers of the raioane. City and village governments are organized much like the raion- level governments. In addition to the raioane, Chisinau (the national capital), Balti, Bender, and Tiraspol are designated municipalities and are directly subordinate to the national government.12 In 1991 the national government began work on an administrative reorganization intended to alter this structure and to reintroduce a system of counties (județe), communes, and villages similar to the one that had been in effect during the interwar period, and one that was still in use in Romania. Under the new system, the counties would consolidate functions carried out by the smaller raioane, and local executives would be elected directly. However, this effort was stalled by the secession of Transnistria and the declaration of sovereignty by the Gagauz region, and the Parliament elected in 1994 put the matter aside.13

11 For details see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy.
12 For details see, Online Web: http://frd/cs/moldova/md02_07b.pdf/frd/cs/moldova/md02_07b.pdf
13 For details see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy.
For administrative purposes, the republic of Moldova is divided into districts, towns and villages in which local-government is practiced. At village and town level, elected local councils and mayors operate as autonomous administrative authorities. At district level an elected council coordinates the activities of the village and town councils. The area on the left bank of the Dniester (Dnestr or Nistru) river as well as certain other places in the south of the republic i.e Gagauzia may be granted special autonomous status according to special statutory provisions of organic law.14

Moldova is organized as a unitary state with power concentrated in the central institutions. However, the constitution allows special status for ethnic minority areas. An agreement for special autonomous status for the Gagauz Yeri region was adopted in January 1995. The Transdnisterian region declared its independence in December 199515 but is not recognized as an independent state by other countries although so far, it has run its own affairs. The Gagauz Popular Assembly has also begun to operate as an effective regional legislature. City and local councils are also elected and operate at the grassroots level, but with limited authority because of the strictures of a unitary state. In December 1994, the Moldovan parliament adopted a Law on a special legal status of the Gagauzi-dominated region, Gagauz-Yeri-Gagauzya. However, until now, a real compromise has not been found with the Tiraspol-authorities in Transnistria. The Tiraspol-authorities even re-elected their own president, Igor Smirnov, in December 1996. Current negotiations between the two sides over a special status of the Dniester region within the Moldovan state are deadlocked, after attempts, in May and July of 1996, to sign a memorandum on normalizing bilateral ties failed. The unitary state structure of Moldova implies that revenues will be provided from the center to the localities. Exceptions are found in Gagauzia and in the proposed Transdnisterian agreement, where local control of many aspects of administration and a local fiscal formula are provided. Central revenues, and thus contributions to the local authorities, have been limited because of Moldova’s reduced economic productivity.16 Thus local authorities still rely heavily on local enterprises for contributions of services. Most local leaders had much of their experience

14 Europa World Year Book, n.5.
working under the Soviet system, and do not know how to manage municipal governments effectively. The Academy of Public Administration is training an increasing number of local officials, but major changes will require additional training and a more productive economy in November 1997, the parliament rejected the government’s draft laws on the reorganization of local governments. Local officials are local government employees; however, most of the money still comes from the center.

**Judiciary:** Every citizen of Moldova has the right to free access to justice. The Supreme Court of Justice, the court of appeal, tribunals and the courts of law, administrate Justice in the country. The president following proposals by the Higher Magistrates Council appoints judges for the supreme court of justice and the courts of law. They are elected for a five-year term, and subsequently for a ten-year term, after which their term of office expires on reaching the age limit. The Higher Magistrates Council is responsible for the appointment, transfer and promotion of judges, as well as disciplinary action against them and is composed of 11 magistrates, who are appointed for a five-year term. The prosecutor general, appointed by parliament, exercises control over the enactment of law, as well as defending the legal order and the rights and freedoms of citizens. ¹⁷

The courts operate under the Ministry of Justice and are separate from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Thirteen district courts, five regional appeals courts, and two higher courts have been established. The president appoints the district judges and the parliament appoints the Supreme Court. Appointments to the new judicial structure were being made during 1995 and 1996. With the help of the Council of Europe, the structures and procedures now in place resemble European models more than the previous Soviet ones. ¹⁸ The independence of the judiciary has increased markedly since the end of the Soviet Union. On the whole, judges seem to operate impartially. There has been a serious, ongoing effort to replace personnel from the Communist era with newly trained judges. ¹⁹ Judges have now tenure and they serve for an initial period of five years and may be reappointed for a ten-year term. Following that, they can serve until retirement.

¹⁷ Europa World Year Book, n.5.
¹⁸ "The Court of Moldova", For details see, Online Web: http://flagspot.net/flags/md-dnies.html
¹⁹ "The Moldavian Court" For details see, Online Web: http://www.rol.md/Apel/html.
However, the prosecutor’s office has still a very strong influence on proceedings. While defendants are considered innocent until proven guilty, prosecutor’s recommendations are exceedingly influential. In July 1997, prosecutors obtained the power to open and close investigations without bringing them to the court’s attention. Suspects have the right to a public defender under the constitution, but this right is frequently undermined in practice. Access to a lawyer is frequently granted only after a suspect has been detained for a full day. The government requires, although does not pay, the local bar association to provide lawyers for indigent defendants. The constitution formally enshrines the principle of equality before the law. It also assigns special status for regions where ethnic minorities are concentrated. This provision has been utilized in Gagauzia and is central to the negotiations over the Transdniestrian area.  

The old Soviet Code on Penal Procedure with some amendments is still law in Moldova. Prosecutors and judges issue warrants. Illegal searches have occurred and there is also no judicial review of search warrants. Prosecutors have an inadequate capability to oversee wiretapping by the police and other security agencies. The prosecutor’s office, which is supposed to authorize wiretaps, is unable to exert any real check on the activities of these agencies.  

The court system and the criminal code were reformed in 1996. The new structure provided a separation between police functions and the courts. The Ministry of Justice replaced the Ministry of the Interior as the administrator for the prison system. Cases are generally heard in a large city court within six months. Decisions are made within approximately six months. Disputants have the right to appeal judgments. Important judgments are not generally public. Judicial review of administrative actions is not yet established. There are no specialized bankruptcy courts. Anti-monopoly legislation was adopted in 1992 but has been largely ineffective. Most of the state-owned monopolies are scheduled for breakup and privatization; however this has yet to occur. Moldova has laws prohibiting insider dealing in shares of public joint-stock companies.  

21 Ibid, p. 162.  
22 For details see, Online Web: http://flagspot.net/flags/md-dnies.html
The Constitutional Court: A powerful and independent Constitutional Court has sole jurisdiction over constitutional disputes in Moldova. It is composed of six judges, who are appointed for a six-year term. The constitutional court powers include the enforcement of constitutionality control over laws, decrees and governmental decisions as well as international treaties endorsed by the republic, the conformation of the results of elections and referendums, the explanation and clarification of the constitution and decisions over matters of the constitutionality of parties. The decisions of the constitutional court are final and are not subject to appeal. The Constitutional Court has in practice overturned actions of both the parliament and the president. It has limited some presidential attempts to bypass parliamentary and governmental prerogatives. In July 1997, the court declared several decrees issued by President Lucinschi, related to the establishment of an anti-corruption agency, unconstitutional on the grounds that this sort of power is the prerogative of the legislative and not the executive branch in March 1996. Earlier, the Constitutional Court has also ruled the dismissal of Defense Minister Pavel Creanga accused of corruption by President Snegur illegal.

Thus, the constitutional structure in Moldova provides for divided power, or checks-and-balances system between Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. During the term of President Snegur, the parliament with the government was able to thwart various presidential initiatives. Prior to the 1996 presidential election, the president was often at odds with both the government and the parliament. However, the presidential victory of Lucinschi, together with Prime Minister Sangheli's resignation, resulted in increased cooperation among the institutions.

Political Process in Moldova: Since its independence, Moldova has made significant progress in establishing state institutions to manage the transition to democracy. Moldova has emerged as a functioning sovereign state from one of the poorest and least developed of the Soviet republics. Successive democratically elected governments have laid the

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foundation for a stable democratic political system. Well-conceived governmental policies have reduced the cleavages of a multi-ethnic society, granting autonomy within the Moldovan state to the Gagauz people, and pursuing inclusionary policies towards the Russian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian minorities. However, the political development in Moldova’s fourteen years of independence have been difficult, complicated by a short war and Transnistrian secession, an agriculturally-based economy dependent on eastern markets, a political tradition of strong central power and citizen apathy, a lack of governmental experience and capacity, a large emigration of working-age population, and a geography that traps Moldova between Russia and Europe. Creating the means to govern and administer a country faced with these challenges in a democratic manner in a relatively short period of time has been a daunting undertaking. Yet Moldova has had some success on the road to a more democratic future. It has conducted a series of elections that, with one exception, have met international standards. It has changed ruling parties and leaders regularly and peacefully. It has privatised many aspects of its economy, has reduced governmental regulation of business, and has kept inflation within manageable limits. It has also developed a political and occasionally effective opposition. Nonetheless, Moldova faces some continuing obstacles in its transition to democracy. The largest of these is the concentration of executive powers and the decision-making in the hands of President. This concentration of power in the executive branch builds on Moldova’s Soviet heritage of central authority and citizen apathy. While somewhat constrained by their agreement with the opposition, central authorities continue to outweigh all other voices both in the opposition and in the wider society to the detriment of democratic development.26

Electoral System: Moldova is a country of proportional electoral system. This system provides for distribution of places in representative bodies (Parliament, local councils) in proportion to the number of votes accumulated during the elections. A party gaining 25 percent support would get 25 percent of seats according to the proportional electoral system. Under the proportional electoral system the whole country makes a single electoral circumscription for the purposes of calculation of votes cast and distribution of

26 For details see, Online Web: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADF518.pdf.
representative offices. Moldova's proportional representation electoral system is multiparty-based. There is open competition between the various parties and blocs at all levels of government. The Communist Party, which was banned earlier, re-legalized following the February 1994 parliamentary elections. In recent years, the creation of parties and voting blocs has been relatively unrestricted and parties have formed and re-formed.

**Presidential Elections:** Mircea Snegur was named president of republic of Moldova by the Supreme Soviet in September 1990 and confirmed by popular election in December 1991. Moldova's first presidential election took place in December 1991 and President Snegur was elected without opposition. The second post-independence presidential election took place in November-December 1996. In the first round, held on 17 November 1996, Snegur, running as the candidate of the new Party of Rebirth and Reconciliation, received 39 percent of the vote. Speaker of the Parliament Petru Lucinschi, running as an independent with the support of the left, received 28 percent; Prime Minister Sangheli, nine percent; Communist Party leader Vladimir Voronin, 10 percent; and leader of the Party of Democratic Forces Valeriu Matei, nine percent. There were also four independents in the race. On 1 December 1996, Lucinschi was elected president by a 54-46 percent margin. He took office on 15 January 1997 and served a four-year term. International observers judged the presidential election to be free and fair. After the election Lucinschi nominated Ciubuc as the new prime minister but retained most of Snegur's cabinet.

The 17 November and 1 December in 1995, presidential elections polarized the entire Moldovan society mainly because they involved all the three main power branches. The presidential candidates included the incumbent Mircea Snegur (President), Andrei Sangheli (prime-minister, the executive) and Petru Lucinschi (chairman of the parliament, the legislative). There were six other candidates, yet the attention focused on the race between the above three, which became harsh and even personal. During most of

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1996, Snegur repeatedly threatened to dismiss Sangheli’s cabinet for incompetence, especially for its inability to solve serious social issues, including that of huge arrears in paying salaries to state employees and pensions. However, his constitutional powers eventually proved insufficient for sacking one single minister. Snegur’s frustration surfaced in his pledge that, in case he was re-elected president in November, he would fight for changing Moldova into a presidential republic, in which he would enjoy broad prerogatives and would be in direct control of the government. However, in the presidential elections of 1996, Parliamentary speaker Petru Lucinschi surprised the nation with an upset victory over the incumbent, Mircea Snegur, in a second round of balloting. The elections were widely judged as free and fair by international observers, a hallmark that would come to characterize every other nationwide election in Moldova as well.

Comprehensibly for a small country like Moldova, one of the main issues in the election campaign was the question of east or westward orientation, the closer integration or cooperation with Russia or Romania. Snegur most strongly opposed the eastward orientation. He continued to press for the country’s official language being defined in the Constitution as ‘Romanian’, repeatedly condemned the insistence on Moldavians’ distinct ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity, advocated a political treaty with Romania (including economic and cultural integration) and said he would continue to require the unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova’s territory. On the other hand, Parliament speaker Petru Lucinschi, former secretary of the CPSU Central Committee under Mikhail Gorbachev, stated that relations with the Russian Federation are a top priority for Moldova and pledged to improve them considerably if elected president. The former historian ran independently for the office of candidate. In the first round, Lucinschi lagged behind incumbent president Snegur who came out first with 38.71 percent of votes (Lucinschi 27.69 percent). However, in the second round, Lucinschi was backed by a leftist coalition (Vladimir Voronin, the chairman of the Communist Party, who got 10.26 percent in the first round, a coalition that supported Sangheli in the first

30 Moldova: Dniester Refuses to take Part in Presidential Elections, FBIS-SOV-96-171, 3 September 1996.
round and most of the socialists). Lucinschi eventually won with an 8 percent margin over Snegur (53.14 percent and 46.86 percent respectively). On 2 December 1996, Sangheli's cabinet resigned in order to pave the way for a government able to cooperate closer with the new president. The following day, parliament accepted the resignations.33 (For detail see the Table. 1).

Table: 1

Moldova: Presidential Election 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates and Party</th>
<th>Percentage of Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mircea Snegur (PRCM - Party of Revival and Accord of Moldova)</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petru Lucinschi (PDAM - Agrarian Democratic Party of Moldova)</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Voronin (PCRM - Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova)</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrei Sangheli (PDAM - Agrarian Democratic Party of Moldova)</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valeriu Matei (PFD - Party of Democratic Forces)</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://www.binghamton.edu/cdp/era/elections/mld96pres.html

Parliamentary Elections: The first democratic elections in Moldova for the Supreme Soviet were held in February and March 1990. Delegates were elected for terms of four years in 380 single-member electoral districts. By early 1993 this number had decreased to 332 following removals and resignations. Electoral rules called for candidates to be nominated by electoral districts rather than by "social organizations," as had been the practice previously. Meetings of work collectives of 100 persons and residents' meetings of fifty or more persons were empowered to nominate candidates.34 In order to be elected, candidates had to receive more than 50 percent of the votes cast in an electoral district. When there was no victor in the first round of elections, the two candidates with the

34 For details see, Online Web: http://frd/cs/moldova/md.
highest number of votes competed against each other in a second round. In 1990 the republic was divided by the secession of separatist regions and by the outbreak of widespread fighting in Transnistria. At the same time, economic crisis loomed, a result of the collapse of the economic institutions of the Soviet Union. The Moldovan government pursued reforms to address this crisis, but progress toward a market economy was slow, partly as a result of the government's preoccupation with the conflicts among the ethnic groups and partly because of resistance to reform on the part of those with vested interests in the communist system. In contrast to the artificial quiescence that characterized previous contests, the 1990 elections saw considerable controversy. While national CPM officials, including then-First Secretary Petru Lucinschi, promoted open access to the political process, local communist officials in many areas used traditional means to retain power. Reformers complained that local electoral commissions were controlled by "enemies of restructuring" and that the administrative apparatus was being used to subvert the nominating process. Just as important in determining the outcome of the election as bureaucratic resistance, however, was the Popular Front's organizational weakness in many localities outside the capital, especially in comparison with the local strength of the CPM's rural party apparatus. Despite these difficulties, Popular Front approved candidates were on the ballot in 219 out of Moldova's 380 electoral districts by the February 25 election date. Meanwhile, the CPM, enjoying a rebound in popularity and effectiveness under Lucinschi's direction, accounted for 86 percent of all candidates.35

A high degree of cooperation between the Popular Front and reformers within the CPM hierarchy was also evident during the early transition period. On February 11, 1990, the Popular Front, with the support of government authorities, had organized a "Republic's Voters Meeting" in Chisinau. This was attended by more than 100,000 people and was addressed by Lucinschi and other high-level communist officials. Among the candidates supported by the Popular Front one could find the names of ranking CPM members such as Mircea Snegur. A Central Committee secretary since 1985, Snegur was appointed chairman of the Presidium of the Moldavian Supreme Soviet by the staunchly antireform

CPM leader Simion Grossu in July 1989. By early 1990, however, Snegur had realigned himself with the Popular Front and its political program. The results of the first round of elections in February confirmed the main trends that had appeared during the nominating process. Competitive races were held in 373 of the 380 districts, and turnout was 84 percent of the electorate. In the 140 contests decided without a runoff, reformers claimed victory for fifty-nine of the candidates, although 115 of the total elected were CPM members (some of whom were supported by the Popular Front). As during the nominating phase, reformers alleged that significant violations of the election law had occurred, despite the Central Electoral Commission's finding of no major infractions. The second round of elections, held on March 10, 1990, filled the bulk of positions in the republic's Supreme Soviet and had a decisive impact on the country's political life. A fall in turnout for the second round, to 75 percent of the electorate, appears to have hurt the performance of the Popular Front, which won in only forty-two out of 237 districts, a considerably weaker showing than in the February contest. With the conclusion of the runoff, 305 of the deputies to the new Supreme Soviet were CPM members; 101 of the Supreme Soviet deputies were selected from the list supported by the Popular Front. With the support of deputies sympathetic to its views, however, the Popular Front could control more than half of the votes in the new Supreme Soviet.36

Political Developments in the wake of the 1990 Elections: As the political influence of the Popular Front increased in the wake of the elections, the powerful faction of Romanian nationalists within the organization became increasingly vocal in the pursuit of their agenda. The nationalists argued that the Popular Front should immediately use its majority in the Supreme Soviet to attain independence from Russian domination, end migration into the republic, and improve the status of ethnic Romanians. Yedinstvo and its supporters within the Supreme Soviet argued against independence from the Soviet Union, against implementation of the August 1989 Law on State Language (making Moldovan written in the Latin alphabet the country's official language), and for increased autonomy for minority areas. Hence, clashes occurred almost immediately once the new Supreme Soviet began its inaugural session in April 1990. Popular Front representatives,

36 For details see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?lrd/cstdy.
for example, entered a motion to rename the Supreme Soviet the National Council (Sfatul Tarii, the name of the 1917 legislature), which, they argued was in keeping with national tradition. Although this motion failed, it provoked an acerbic public exchange among the deputies, which made subsequent cooperation difficult at best. A second controversial motion, on establishing a Moldovan flag (three equal vertical stripes of bright blue, yellow, and red, like the Romanian flag, but with Moldova's coat of arms in the center), passed in the Supreme Soviet but was widely and conspicuously disregarded by its opponents. The selection of a new legislative leadership also provoked political confrontation. Those appointed to high-level posts were overwhelmingly ethnic Romanians, a situation that left minority activists little hope that their interests would be effectively represented in deliberations on key issues. Ethnic Romanians accounted for only 70 percent of the Supreme Soviet as a whole but for 83 percent of the leadership. All five of the top positions in the Supreme Soviet were held by ethnic Romanians, as were eighteen of twenty positions in the new Council of Ministers. Faced with what they considered a concerted effort by ethnic Romanian nationalists to dominate the republic, conservatives and minority activists banded together and began to resist majority initiatives. Organized in the Supreme Soviet as the Soviet Moldavia (Sovetskaya Moldaviya) faction, the anti reformers became increasingly inflexible.37

As confrontation grew among legislative leaders, initiatives undertaken at the local level drew the republic into worsening interethnic conflict. In the minority regions, local forces actively resisted what they considered to be discriminatory legislation from Chisinau. May Day celebrations in Tiraspol became mass protests against the republic's Supreme Soviet. The Tiraspol, Bender, and Ribnita city councils, as well as the Ribnita raion council, each passed measures suspending application of the flag law in their territories. Deputies from Tiraspol and Bender, unable to block legislation they considered inimical to their interests, announced their intention to withdraw from the Supreme Soviet. Pro-Popular Front demonstrators outside the Supreme Soviet responded to what they perceived as the obstructionism of minority legislators by becoming increasingly hostile. Following a series of confrontations in the capital, a leading legislative representative of

Yedinstvo was badly beaten; 100 deputies associated with the Russian-speaking Soviet Moldavia faction withdrew from the Supreme Soviet on May 24, 1990. A new reformist government, with Mircea Druc as chairman of the Council of Ministers, took over that same day after the previous government suffered a vote of no confidence. The many changes wrought by this government included a ban on the CPM, a ban on political parties becoming in effect synonymous with the government, and the outlawing of government censorship. In June 1990, the country changed its name from the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova and declared its sovereignty. 38

Increasing strain between nationalists and their opponents had become apparent since the opening session of the Supreme Soviet. In the culmination of this trend, delegates to the second congress of the Popular Front passed measures signaling a clear break with the CPM and took an openly nationalistic direction. The Popular Front's new program called for the country to be renamed the Romanian Republic of Moldova, for its citizens to be called "Romanians," and for the Romanian language to be designated the language of the republic. The program also called for the return of ethnic Romanian-inhabited areas transferred to Ukraine when the Moldavian SSR was formed and for the withdrawal of Soviet forces. The Popular Front's promotion of this agenda, which was perceived by minority populations to be expressly nationalistic in character, inexorably fractionalized the population. Many of Moldova's ethnic Romanians also perceived the Popular Front as extremist, excessively pro-Romanian, and ineffectual. The opposition was able to bring the public's general dissatisfaction with the Popular Front into focus and eventually bring about a reversal in the political fortunes of the Popular Front. 39

The 1994 Elections: Campaigning for the February 27, 1994, parliamentary elections revolved around economic reforms, competing strategies for resolving the separatist crises, and relations with both the CIS and Romania. Debate on the issues of moving to a market economy, privatization, land reform, and foreign policy was polarized. The results

39 For details see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy.
of the election quickly changed the course of Moldovan politics and stood in sharp
closest to the results of the 1990 election. Nationalist and pro-Romanian forces were
rejected overwhelmingly in favor of those backing Moldova's independence and in favor
of accommodating ethnic minorities. Under laws passed in preparation for the 27
February 1994 elections, the Parliament was reduced from 380 seats to a more
manageable 104. Fifty of these delegates were selected from fifty newly drawn single-
member districts, and the remainders were elected from larger multi-member districts on
the basis of proportional representation. Candidates were nominated by voters
(independent candidates had to submit petitions with at least 1,000 signatures), political
parties, or "sociopolitical organizations"; parties had to receive at least 4 percent of the
vote to be accorded seats. The Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova won a majority of
fifty-six of the 104 seats, followed by the Yedinstvo/Socialist Bloc with twenty-eight
seats. Two pro-Romanian unification parties did not do well: the Congress of Peasants
and Intellectuals won eleven seats, and the CPDF won nine seats. A number of other
parties did not get a high enough percentage of the popular vote to be represented in the
new Parliament. In March the chair of Parliament, Petru Lucinschi, was elected to his
post, and the prime minister, Andrei Sangheli, was reappointed to his post. In April
Parliament approved a new Council of Ministers, Moldova's membership in the CIS, and
Moldova's signing of a CIS charter on economic union (although the country would not
participate in political or military integration within the CIS). A referendum on 6 March
1994, confirmed the country's course of political independence for the future, the
Moldovan electorate voted overwhelmingly for Moldova to maintain its territorial
integrity.40

Now that the legislative logjam was broken, Parliament was able to work on a new
constitution, which it ratified on 28 July and implemented 27 August 1994. The new
constitution granted substantial autonomy to Transnistria and the "Gagauz Republic"
while reasserting Moldovan national identity and sovereignty. Gagauzia (in Romanian;
Gagauz-Yeri, in Gagauz) would have cultural, administrative, and economic (but not
territorial) autonomy and would elect a regional legislative assembly, which in turn

40 For details see, Online Web: http://www.country-studies.com/moldova/the-1994-elections.html
would elect a *guvernator* (in Romanian; *baskan*, in Gagauz), who would also be a member of the Moldovan government. This was ratified by Parliament in January 1995. Members of the Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova held a cautious attitude toward marketization and privatization, leading experts to believe that progress in economic reform would be slow, but would be more consistent and better implemented than previously. The hard-line nationalists and the former communists could not vote as a majority to block progress.  

Moldova's first multi-party and post-Communist parliamentary elections after independence were held on 27 February 1994. A 104-seats parliament was elected, at that time dominated by the majority of the Agrarian-Democratic Party (56 seats). Another three parliamentary fractions included the Socialist Party and the Unitate-Edinstvo Bloc (Unity) formed of 28 deputies, the Bloc of Peasants and Intellectuals (11 deputies) and the Christian-Democratic Popular Front (9 seats). The centrist Agrarian Democratic Party won an absolute majority in this first election, and ruled cooperatively with the Socialist and Unity Party for the first 18 months of the session. Parties on the right, the Christian Democratic Popular Front and the Peasants and Intellectuals bloc, formed the opposition. International organizations such as the OSCE judged the election to be fair. On 26 June 1995, President Mircea Snegur resigned from the Agrarian Democratic Party, causing a split in the party and forcing the Agrarians to rely on the Socialists for a majority.  

**Political Realignment and Accommodation:** Lucinschi's election on February 4, 1993, to the leading position in Parliament marked the peak of a process of political realignment in Moldova. By early 1993, the Popular Front, now named the Christian Democratic Popular Front (CDPF) was in near total disarray. Moderate intellectuals (such as Mosanu), who had added tremendously to the prestige of the Popular Front during its early years, organized the "Congress of Intellectuals" in order to promote a nationalistic, but less extreme, agenda. As a result, they were expelled from the CDPF in mid-May. As a consequence of factionalism and defection, the CDPF's voting strength in Parliament was reduced to approximately twenty-five deputies. With the CDPF in decline, power

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41 For details see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy.
shifted to the bloc of Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova deputies (the Viata Satului legislative club), which, with support from independent deputies, was able to play a dominant role in Parliament. Lucinschi's election and the realignment of forces among the deputies brought Parliament into much closer alignment with President Snegur and Prime Minister Sangheli's government on the ethnic conflict. As a consequence, Moldova was better positioned than it had been in the previous two years to end the insfighting that had characterized its political life during that time. There was hope that Moldova's leaders would be able to resolve the ongoing civil conflict, which had, of necessity, been the dominant issue in the republic since its inception, and to proceed with the reforms that Moldova so desperately needed. At the same time, the realignment moved Moldova's government into a more conservative position with respect to economic and political reform, marginalizing legislators who were elected as opposition candidates and vesting more power in the hands of those who were originally elected as representatives of the CPM. In particular, the realignment gave near-veto power to the bloc of Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova deputies, many of whom were state and collective farm presidents. Although the great majority of these individuals supported democratic politics, the strength of their commitment to the transition to a market economy was questionable. Despite the powerful combination of government, the presidency, and Lucinschi's parliamentary leadership working in harmony, the hopelessly tangled web of factions and rivalries within Parliament could not be overcome, and legislation ground to a halt. The pro-Romanian faction objected, but a vote was taken to dissolve parliament and hold early Parliamentary elections.\footnote{For details see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy.}

The elections held in Moldova on 27 February 1994 was described by international observers as free and fair, though authorities in Transnistria refused to allow balloting there and made efforts to discourage the inhabitants from participating. Only some 7,500 inhabitants voted at specially established precincts in right-bank Moldova. The new Parliament, with its Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova majority, did not face the same gridlock that characterized the old Parliament with its majority of Popular Front hard-line nationalists: legislation was passed, and changes were made. President Snegur

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signed the Partnership for Peace agreement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in March 1994, and in April Parliament approved Moldova's membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States and in a CIS charter on economic union. On July 28, Parliament ratified a new constitution, which went into effect 27 August 1994 and provided substantial autonomy to Transnistria and Gagauzia.\footnote{Ibid.}

In 1995 Moldova was still faced with substantial domestic social and economic problems, but it seemed to be on the road to making progress toward the ideal of an open-market democracy. The country's complex ethnic makeup and the political legacy of the Soviet period continued to contribute to the government's difficulties, but the fall from power of the extreme nationalists in the 1994 parliamentary elections lowered ethnic tensions and allowed compromises to be made with the major ethnic groups. With Russia now a partner in negotiations on Transnistria and with pledges by the new government to respect the rights of the country's Russian-speaking populace, the threat of international hostilities has been greatly reduced.\footnote{For details see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy.}

The 1998 Elections: The second parliamentary elections were held on 22 March 1998. As in the first elections, they were held on the basis of proportional representation with party lists. Four parties passed the Five percent threshold for representation.\footnote{Stewart, During the election campaign, did the Communists take unfair advantage of their control of the government to win votes?, see, Online Web: http://aceproject.org/today/feature-articles/parliamentary-elections-in-moldova} The Party of Moldovan Communists won 30 percent of the popular vote, which translated into 40 seats in the 101-member chamber. The center-right Democratic Convention of Moldova (CDM) won 26 seats. The For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova Bloc (PMDP), the centrist party most closely associated with President Lucinschi, won 24 seats. The center-right Party of Democratic Forces won 11 seats.\footnote{“Election in Moldova”, see, Online Web: http://www.electionguide.org/election.php.} The Transdneister authorities prevented some people from voting in the elections and the Helsinki Committee, Moldova noted electoral irregularities. Despite the Communist victory, the three non-Communist parties formed a coalition called the Alliance for Democracy and Reform in April 1998. Ion Ciubuc was renominated as prime minister. It was agreed that the remaining 13
ministerial positions in the government would be split between the three parties on a 2-2-1 basis with the CDM and PMDP each having two ministers for each one of the Party of Democratic Forces.48

The Agrarians were the first to raise the question of land ownership and economic reorganizations in the agricultural sector, which became an important issue. Their popularity also followed the loss of support of one of the initiators of Moldovan independence, The National Front of Moldova. The movement had alienated reform-oriented people, which resulted in the establishment of unity as well as the Social Democratic party. The support for the Socialist Party comes mainly from nostalgic people. The bitter feud between then-President Snegur and the Agrarian Democratic Party (PDAM) dominated government headed by Prime Minister Sangheli took an ugly turn. Snegur accused Defense Minister Pavel Creanga of corruption and demanded his resignation. This was despite the fact that, under Moldovan law, only the prime minister has the authority to dismiss ministers. After Creanga refused to resign, Snegur dispatched troops which surrounded the building for several hours before an emergency parliamentary session ended the impasse.49 In June, Snegur warned that if Creanga was not dismissed, he would assume direct control over the army, elements of which showed loyalty to him and not Creanga. Creanga responded by saying he would call troops to arms if attempts were made to forcibly dismiss him. Following this exchange, events stabilized as the November presidential election loomed and Snegur was defeated.50

In November 1997, the parliament rejected a government-proposed law to set up a land registry. This has been a condition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for resuming transfers to Moldova. Most prices, with the exception of energy, were liberalized by 1993. Energy prices were partially liberalized in 1997, but the parliament suspended the incomplete policy in October. Nevertheless, gas and electricity prices are

48 Ibid.
now at cost-recovery levels. Legislation permits ownership and operation of businesses. Regulations, however, are strict and often arbitrarily enforced by an inefficient and often corrupt bureaucracy. The official cost for registering a new company is between $100 and $1,000, and the process takes one to three months. New private enterprise registrations grew by 150 percent in 1996, although 90 percent of that figure represented sole proprietorships. A new bankruptcy code was adopted in 1996, and gives new powers to liquidators. The prioritization of wage arrears, tax arrears, credit arrears, and other unpaid claims, however, is uncertain.

**Trend of voter turnout at the Elections:** The first post-Communist presidential election in 1991 had an 83-percent voter turnout. The 1994 parliamentary election drew 79 percent. Local and municipal elections in 1995 drew lower rates and some local runoffs failed to attract the requisite 50 percent, especially in the cities where voters seemed to tire of repeated elections. Turnout in Gagauzia for the election to determine regional boundaries in March 1995 were 73 percent. The elections for the Bashkan and Popular Assembly in May and June of 1995 drew approximately 70 percent. The first round of the 1996 election drew 68 percent, and the runoff drew 72 percent of eligible voters. The table for the 1994 Parliamentary election has been given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTY/GROUPING</th>
<th>VOTES</th>
<th>% VOTES</th>
<th>SEATS</th>
<th>% OF SEATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDAM - Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat Agrar din Moldova)</td>
<td>766589</td>
<td>43.18</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSMUE - Socialist Party and ‘Unitate-Edinstvo’ Movement Bloc (Blocul electoral Partidul Socialist si Miscarea “Unitate-Edinstvo”)</td>
<td>390584</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTI - Peasants and Intellectuals Bloc (Blocul Taranilor si Intelectualilor)</td>
<td>163513</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFPCD - Alliance of the Popular Christian</td>
<td>133606</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51 "Information Note", see, Online Web: http://www.echr.coe.int/Eng/InformationNotes.  
52 Ibid.  
Political Parties: Moldova's political organizations are associational. Party identification is fluid and membership is weak. Voters identify more with the personalities and positions of leading political figures than with parties. There is no data available on party membership. However, in 1993 more than twenty political parties and movements were registered in Moldova. Until 1990 the Communist Party of Moldavia (CPM) was the dominant political force in the republic. It had controlled the administrative, economic, and cultural affairs of the Moldavian SSR from its establishment until 1990. During that period, CPM officials monopolized virtually all politically significant government positions. However, once democratic elections were decided upon, the party's power disintegrated swiftly. The CPM was formally banned in August 1991, following the abortive August coup d'etat against Soviet president Gorbachev, but former communists continue to participate actively in politics through their membership in a variety of
successor organizations. In the wake of the 1990 elections, the Moldovan Popular Front founded in 1989 and consisting of an association of independent cultural and political groups, moved into a commanding position in the country's political life. It emerged as an advocate of increased autonomy from the Soviet Union and of the rights of the Moldavian SSR's ethnic Romanian population. Popular Front delegates were able to dominate proceedings in the Supreme Soviet and to select a government made up of individuals who supported its agenda. The Popular Front was well organized nationally, with its strongest support in the capital and in areas of the country most heavily populated by ethnic Romanians. However, once the organization was in power, internal disputes led to a sharp fall in its popular support and fragmented it into several competing factions by early 1993. In February 1993, the Popular Front was reformed as the Christian Democratic Popular Front (CDPF). 54 Several other parties, primarily composed of ethnic Romanians, were organized after 1990. The largest and most influential of these ethnically based parties is the Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova, which is a coalition of former communists and moderate to status-quo supporters of Moldovan statehood and closer economic ties with Russia. The party's support comes mainly from the rural population, economic conservatives, and ethnic minorities opposed to reunification with Romania. The Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova won a majority of the votes in the 1994 parliamentary election. A much smaller but still influential political group is the Social Democratic Party of Moldova. Most of the Social Democrat leaders originally participated in the Popular Front but later formed their own organization in response to what they perceived as the increasingly nationalistic position of that party. The Social Democrats are multiethnic, and their constituency consists mainly of educated professional and managerial groups. Their support is strongest in the republic's capital. Another independent formation committed to promoting a less nationalistic agenda for the republic, the Democratic Party for the Rebirth and Prosperity of Moldova (PDRPM), was formed in late 1990. The PDRPM draws its support primarily from among ethnic Romanian intellectuals and is active primarily in the capital. At the other extreme of the political spectrum is the National Christian Party (NCP). The NCP is

54 Moldova, Library of Congress Country Studies, see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html
more expressly nationalistic than the Popular Front and its other competitors, Congress of the Intelligentsia, which is a component of the Congress of Peasants and Intellectuals, a bloc in the 1994 elections, the Democratic Party, and the Democratic Labor Party and it campaigned openly for reunification with Romania during the 1994 election. Other parties active in the 1994 campaign for the Parliament were the Reform Party, the Yedinstvo/Socialist Bloc, the Republican Party, the Democratic Labor Party, the Green Alliance, the Women's Association of Moldova, and the Victims of Totalitarian Repression. In late 1993, former Prime Minister Valeriu Muravschi, along with several other leading members of Parliament unhappy with the direction of policy under the existing government, formed yet another party, the Socialist Workers' Party, in order to counter what they saw as the excessively conservative influence of the Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova. Non-Romanian ethnic communities have also formed political organizations representing their interests. In the early transition period, the most influential of these was the Yedinstvo- Unitatea Intermovement. Yedinstvo, whose members were not only Russians but also Ukrainians, Bulgarians, and other Russian-speaking residents of the republic, is politically conservative in its support of the pre-1990 status quo. Based primarily in Transnistria, it is strongly pro-Russian. In Parliament, the Conciliere legislative club represents its positions. Yedinstvo emerged in 1988 from the mobilization of Russian speaking workers responding to efforts to alter the republic's language laws and demote the status of the Russian language. During the transition period, Yedinstvo was the most effective and influential minority nationalist organization. Its representatives walked out of the first session of the democratically elected Moldavian Supreme Soviet in 1990. In local elections, its adherents won control over local and raioane governments throughout Transnistria. Gagauz Halkı (Gagauz People) is a second pivotal minority political group, formed to represent Moldova's population of approximately 153,000 Gagauz. Like the Russian-speaking community in Transnistria, with whom they had been close political allies, Gagauz nationalists gained control over local government in the five southern raioane, where their numbers continue

55 Ibid.
to be concentrated. Like the Transnistrians, the Gagauz declared themselves sovereign in 1990. The major political parties in Moldova are:

**Democratic Party of Moldova:** The founding conference of ‘For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova’ socio-political movement (FDPM) was held on February 8, 1997. There were 860 delegates from all Moldovan towns and rayons at the conference. FDPM was founded at the initiative of the members of the ‘Pro Lucinschi’ bloc who intended to establish a centrist movement aimed at supporting the President elected in 1996 in implementing his program. Party governing bodies were elected during the conference. Furthermore, party statute and political programs were approved. Dumitru Diacov was elected the Chairman of the FDPM. Based on the principles of its electoral platform, FDPM decided to join the Alliance for Democracy and Reforms (ADR). ADR Government was formed as a result of complex negotiations and was the first coalition government in the history of the country. ADR Government included representatives of all political parties’ members of the coalition. 1993 delegates from 39 rayons, towns and municipalities were elected at the first Congress. Dumitru Diacov was reelected as the Chairman of ‘For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova’ movement. The Congress elected FDPM governing bodies and adopted the movement’s statute and program. In addition, the first Congress made an appeal to all centrist political parties and socio-political movements to form a single political party capable of influencing the country development. On April 15, 2000 ‘For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova’ socio-political movement was reorganized into the Democratic Party of Moldova. The Congress elected the governing bodies, approved amendments to the FDPM statute, and adopted the party political and economic program. Dumitru Diacov was elected as the party Chairman. In the time period within the two FDPM congresses, the movement’s membership considerably increased from 8,000 members in 1998 to 25,000 in 2000.

**Communists Party of Moldova:** Following the suspension of the Communist Party activity in August 1991, an initiative group headed by Vladimir Voronin was established.

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56 For details see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy.
57 *Europa Year Book,* n. 5, p. 2741.
in order to fight for annulling the law stipulating the suspension of the party registration. Under the provisions of the Law on Political Parties and Other Socio-Political Organizations the Committee started collecting signatures for establish a new Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova. In October of 1993 the Party of Communists founding conference was held. At the conference 179 delegates of the Party of Communists were elected representing party organizations and committees from Chisinau, Balti, Comrat, Cahul, Soroca, Drochia, Straseni and other rayons of the republic. Also at the conference the establishment of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova was declared, the Statute was approved, and the Republican Party Soviet was elected together with other three co-chairs, one of them being Vladimir Voronin. A call was issued during the conference to all interested persons to join the party. Following the conference, the Party Republican Soviet started forming party structures. In April 1994 the second founding conference was held. The statute of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova was amended during the conference. In the same month the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova was officially registered. During the first Congress of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova held in December 1994, 3100 communists representing 165 primary party organizations from 35 Rayonal Committees elected 409 delegates. The Congress approved the party Program, operated several modifications to the Statute, and elected the Central Committee and Central Revision Commission of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova. The Plenary of the Central Committee elected the Executive Political Committee and designated Vladimir Voronin as its Secretary. In March 1995, the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova joined the Union of Communist Parties. In August 1996 the second Congress of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova was held. At the third Congress held in March 1997, 409 delegates from all the administrative-territorial units of Moldova were elected and 417 primary structures of the party. The Party of Communists took part in the 1995, 1999 and 2003 local elections and 1998 and 2001 parliamentary elections. The Party also designated its candidate in the 1996, 2000 and 2001 presidential elections. After the 1998 parliamentary elections Communist Faction stayed in opposition to the Alliance for Democracy and Reforms and

gave a non-confidence vote to the Sturza Government. In 2000 the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova voted for the parliamentary governing system in the Republic of Moldova. As a result of early parliamentary elections of February 25, 2001 the Party of Communists received 71 out of the 101 seats in Parliament, thus they formed the majority in parliament capable to modify the Constitution and to appoint the head of state. On April 4, 2001 Vladimir Voronin, First Secretary of the Party of Communists, was elected the President of the Republic of Moldova.60 During the IV Congress of the Party of Communists held on April 21-22, 2001 the party bylaws were amended and two new positions were established: Chairperson of the Party of Communists and Executive Secretary of the Party of Communists Central Committee.

Republican Popular Party: The Republican Popular Party (RPP) was founded on 16 April 1999. Initially, the party name was Peasants' Christian Democratic Party of Moldova (PCDPM). The constitution conference adopted the party program and status, elected Vladimir Reus as chairman of PCDPM, and created the Executive Council, the Executive Committee and the Censors Committee. Party’s major goal was to contribute to the resolution of economic problems and to propose 'new strategies in the political activity'. The party participated in the early parliamentary elections of 2001 but failed to pass the 6 percent threshold.61

Agrarian Party of Moldova: In April 1990, the parliamentary group ‘Countryside life’, including 60 deputies founded the Agrarian Democratic Party of Moldova (ADPM). The ADPM was established on October 19, 1991 when the Congress adopted the program and bylaws and elected Dumitru Motpan as the party Chair. On 10 August 1993 the parliamentary group ‘Countryside life’ and several independent deputies accused the Peoples’ Front of Moldova of incompetence, blamed them for the failure to ratify the economic section of the Treaty on Establishing CIS on 4 August 1993, and asked for early parliamentary elections. The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova declared early parliamentary elections for 27 February 1994. On the eve of elections a great number of supporters joined ADPM, fact which secured the success registered by the party in

60 Communist Party Leader Nominated for President, SWB, SU/4087/D/5, 6 March 2001.
elections. The party was cast 43.18 percent of the valid votes and got 54 out of 104 seats in Parliament. The party also secured the positions of Chair of Parliament, two Deputy Chairs and eight out of ten Commission Chairs. At the recommendation of the ADPM the Cabinet headed by Andrei Sangheli was approved. After elections ADPM revised the political program of 1991, which was also at issue at the VI Party Congress. The latter was convened at the time Andrei Sangheli, designated by the Agrarian Party as a candidate in 1996 presidential elections lost the race. The enrolling of Mircea Snegur in the party marked the ascension of the ADPM. Aware of the fact that Petru Lucinschi would be his major opponent in 1996 elections; in 1995 Mircea Snegur supported the protest rallies against the decision of the Ministry of Education to replace the course of History of Romanians with the History of Moldova. In April 1995, the President of the country set forth a legal initiative regarding the name of the state official language, which triggered a very hostile reaction of the parliamentary majority that resulted in Snegur’s dissociation from ADPM. Once the President left, another 11 deputies (in fact 10, as deputy Marina Levitski later on returned back to ADPM) headed by Nicolae Andronic, Party Deputy Chair, left the Agrarian Party.

Socialist Party of Moldova: On 11 August 1992 several members of the Communist Party, whose activity was prohibited in 1991, founded the Socialist Party of Moldova (SPM). A year after it was established, Socialist Party of Moldova decided to run jointly with ‘Unitate-Edinstvo’ (Unity) Movement in the 1994 parliamentary elections. For the first time in the history of the Republic of Moldova a left-wing coalition was formed, which was also supported by the Communist Party. The Electoral Bloc ‘Socialist Party and Unitate-Edinstvo Movement’ received 28 seats in Parliament. The ‘Socialist Union’ faction managed to promote its interests in Parliament by forming a coalition with the majority faction, namely Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova. The cooperation of the Agrarian Democratic Party and ‘Socialist Union’ Faction lasted until 1996 presidential elections, when several disagreements arose between the parties regarding candidates to be designated to run for the presidency. Those disagreements greatly affected the unity of the coalition, which of the ‘Socialist Union’, as well as the integrity of the Socialist Party

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Trade Unions: Legislation provides for the legal formation of trade unions. Over 90 percent of the workforce belongs to the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), which is the successor to the former Communist unions. The GFTU administers the state social insurance system, which makes it difficult to form alternatives to it. Nevertheless, its constituent unions are assuming more independent powers. Most farmers are members of the former collective farms, now organized as joint-stock companies. For most of those living on the former collective farms, little has changed but the name of the organization. A large US Aid supported project to make agricultural privatization a reality has begun, but it is too early to measure any impact. Private farmers constitute a very small proportion of those on the land. Nevertheless, they are increasingly active and have a voice, though little political clout, through the small National Transit Party. Businesses, particularly in Chisinau, are becoming increasingly active. This increased

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activity may result in the organization of business associations and lobbying groups. However, the development of commercial activity is just beginning.66

Civil Society: The growth of civil society has been one of the most significant trends in international development. Civil society is a concept with remarkable elusiveness. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a critical role in helping to amplify the voices of the poor in the decisions that affect their lives. The World Bank also recognizes the important role that CSOs play in meeting the challenges of development and welcomes the opportunity to work with civil society. As applied to the post-communist context, its boundaries have been continuously expanded. Citizen involvement in civil society organizations has been associated with many conditions that are said to “make democracy work.” When democracy is working, the costs of collective action decrease, making for a more participatory citizenry. Membership in associations is also expected to have at least three significant pro-democratic effects on participants and the environment in which they act. (1) Through group activity, a process of social learning takes place which enhance those attitudes, knowledge and skills on which democratic practices are based. (2) Civic activism also impacts positively on the public arena because associations support "the social infrastructure of public spheres that develop agendas, test ideas, embody deliberations, and provide voice." (3) Finally, voluntary associations improve representation in the political system, and thus strengthen political institutions, by giving voice to people and articulating interests to political leaders.67

The post-communist civil society in Moldova is developing at the slow pace and with limited breadth. One main cause seems to be the lasting imprint of communism, which atomized society and crushed civil society whenever possible. This led to a deep distrust of all formal institutions by citizens in the post-communist world. Moreover, in many respects democratic institutions have failed to live up to citizen expectations, resulting in a retreat from public life for many post-communist citizens.

67 For details see Online WebLink/Comm...
Civil Society Organizations in Moldova: Non-governmental organizations have been active in Moldova since 1989, but civil society started its today's formation as a result of radical reforms in economic and political areas only after the country became independent in 1991. Now the establishment of a transitional civil society is under way but this process is not smooth at all. Youth is minimally interested in non-profit civic activity, which is not perceived as a prestigious enough component of their career. Activities of youth organizations of the Soviet type focus on sports events, art exhibitions and cultural performances. Associations, which emerged after 1992, have not helped to develop civic activism, either. Finally, organizations of both types do not represent the majority of the youth, which lives in rural areas, as they are located almost exclusively in Chisinau and other major cities. The most serious problems of youth movements in Moldova include: (i) a small number of the youth involved in setting up their own structures or activity and dominance of volunteer work, (ii) cynical, career-oriented, devoid of ideas character of youth party organizations, (iii) tendency by youth NGOs to stay clear of political debate and focus on electoral process, (iv) intimidation from the government and domination of older leaders in Transnistria, which keeps more daring ideas off the agenda. Human rights remain to be a problem in Moldova and especially in Transnistria. However, the organizations working on the area of human rights protection are recording relatively small impact on the wider public because of (i) the general passivity and lack of confidence in influencing the authorities, and (ii) insecure position of the NGOs vis-a-vis the administration, which effectively limits the appeal of open criticism of human rights record of the government to the few professional organizations whose plight is closely monitored by their Western audience). Most of active NGOs conduct professional work in a narrow technical sense, maintaining small permanent staff and relying mainly on volunteers. Moreover, in Transnistria, where human rights problems are more acute it is not possible to register a non-governmental organization openly aimed at human rights protection. Media market in Moldova is far from being free. Newspapers, due to the small size of the market, are highly dependent on sponsors or political parties and the number of copies is very limited. State-owned television and

68 “Civil Society Development and Democratic Values in Romania and Moldova” see, Online Web: http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/uslaner/eepsbadescusumuslaner.doc+Civil+Society+in+Moldova.
radio command virtual monopoly on the news provision to the population. The Communist government and public authorities take active part in distorting the contents of information (independent news can contest the state broadcast and news only in the urban areas). Journalists are uncertain about the stability of their jobs. Most of them do not feel protected against persecution, threat or pressure as a result of their professional activity. Situation in Transnistria, which has a separate media market from that of the Republic of Moldova, is much more difficult. The position of the media is strongly influenced by the local Communist regime. Media market is monopolized by the separatist authorities. Independent broadcast media do not exist in Transnistria, either. There are only four think tanks in the country. All of them are located in Chisinau - the capital of Moldova. Until the date no think tanks have been established in Transnistria. The existing think tanks are rather weak and most of them work for/with international organizations, which are present in Moldova (UNDP, the World Bank etc.). On the other hand, experience of other countries in transition shows that very soon one can expect of significant growth of organizations of this type and improvement of the quality of the services provided. To summarize, although several data and patterns observed indicate progress in the development of non-governmental sector in Moldova, there is a number of sensitive issues (e.g., freedom of media or human rights protection) where certain regress has been observed in last two years. Moreover, the situation of the non-governmental sector in Transnistria is far from being satisfactory. Finally, we have to note that the critical socio-economic condition of the country seems to be the main threat to democracy and the rule of law in Moldova. This is because a further significant economic decline can provide fertile ground not only for the Communist party, as it was demonstrated in the last election, but for more non-democratic political forces and extremists. Economic collapse could jeopardize the achievements in the area of democratization and civil society development. Thus, it needs to be recognized that only effects of a successful economic reform process may reverse undesirable patterns in the area of economic development, and change the socio-economic situation of Moldova.

69 Ibid.
increase income of population, reduce poverty, guarantee stability and irreversibility of Moldovan achievements in democratization and the development of civil society.\textsuperscript{70}

Prior to the declaration of independence in 1991, some informal organizations were formed in the Moldavian SSR, which later predominantly joined the Democratic Movement of Moldavia for Perestroika, later renamed the Popular Front (PF). Disarray of the PF after independence gave birth to some political parties and youth organizations affiliated to them. The most important ones included Christian Democratic Popular Party and Christian Democratic Youth Union. Other political parties also tried to establish similar organizations of youth, women etc. in different time periods and with rather minor success. An exception can be the Communist Party of Moldova (CPM), established in 1993, which managed to transform the Union of the Youth (the former Komsomol) into the new Komsomol, which collaborates strongly with the CPM. It claims to have 4000 members. Organizations of this kind are perceived as part of the political landscape rather than a subdivision of the NGO sector as such. However, about 16 percent of existing NGOs collaborate with political parties. Basically, the NGO sector is composed of the following three segments\textsuperscript{71}:

1. The first group represents social organizations inherited from Soviet times like: cultural associations of free professionals (unions of writers, composers, journalists); organizations of social sector (Unions of Pensioners, Veterans of War and Work etc.); gender ones (unions of women, youth); (iv) advocacy (i.e. Associations of Victims of Chernobyl); ethnic minority associations; and sport and leisure unions and clubs. In most cases organizations of this group managed to maintain material base and develop infrastructure and were supported financially by the state budget means that created favorable conditions for their activities at the beginning of transition. It is worth mentioning that some of them, especially cultural organizations, were very active in the initial period of systemic changes (unions of writers, journalists, educational organizations etc.). However,

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
only a few of them were able to transform into free and democratic associations (i.e. Union of Journalists).

2. The second group of NGOs consists of new organizations that were created after independence in order to solve some social problems or to promote new ideas and group interests. First human rights groups, ecological organizations, students leagues, associations of civic education and new organizations of youth appeared in 1992-1995. The years from 1995 to 1997 marked a turn in the process of institutionalization of NGOs in Moldova. The adoption of the Law on Public Association in 1996 and a subsequent re-registration of existing organizations in conformity with new legislation helped create favorable conditions for founding democratic organizations. Since 1998 the process of mushrooming of new NGOs has been visible. The main financial source of the NGOs in Moldova comes from the grants offered by external donors. The end of the 1990s witnessed new tendencies in the development of Moldovan NGOs belonging to this group.

3. Governmental NGOs: They are an alternative to the independent organizations, established after 2001. Their mission seems to be the imitation of the opinion of genuine NGOs in some areas, which are particularly sensitive to the government (e.g. media) or participation in the organizations, where presence of NGOs is specified by law. It needs to be mentioned, however, that independent NGOs try to build coalitions based on common values and interests to prevent deterioration of democratic standards, institutions and practices. Coalition initiated by the Independent Center of Journalism against the anti-democratic abuses of freedom of media by authorities can be quoted as an example of such activity. The League for Defense of Human Rights in Moldova (LADOM) recruited, trained and accredited about 2,000 observers while the Helsinki Committee and a few other civil society organizations deployed a handful of observers on election days. The Association for Participatory Democracy (ADEPT) produced civic education materials for these elections and The Association for Civic and Political Culture provided the public with a critical analysis of the electoral process. Thus, in short, there are three groups of NGOs in Moldova. Each group has a different historical development path, sources of finance and motivation for undertaking activities.
Nevertheless, NGOs in the Republic of Moldova cover practically all fields of activity. Although the exact number of NGOs in the country can be a subject of discussion, there is no doubt that the quantitative evolution of the non-governmental sector in Moldova has a tendency to grow and develop especially after the adoption in 1996 of the Law on Public Association. The number of NGOs grew more than two fold in the period 1997-2001, compared to 1992-1996.\(^{72}\)

**Participation of Youth in civic life:** Difficult socio-economic situation of the country creates serious disincentives to effective engagement of the Moldovan youth in public life. The educated urban youth is minimally interested in non-profit civic activity, which is not perceived as a prestigious enough component of their career. Students and young professionals constitute a group, which suffers from confusion, frustration and cynicism while assessing their long-term career prospects in the country, and prefers to adopt a short-term perspective of personal utility and survival. This relative disinterest in social activism also has economic grounds. Students often receive substantial remittances from their parents working abroad, which are spent on conspicuous consumption. After graduation only those with the right origin and connections may be assured of employment in the country, while most are likely to emigrate for work. The harsh conditions of country life and bleak prospects of local employment make the rural youth even more vulnerable to the 'brain drain' of migration to the capital city and living off their parents' money or of emigration in search of a job abroad.\(^{73}\) The majority of those who stay in the rural areas in turn lack the necessary educational and financial resources to engage in civic activity. Those young people who nonetheless were willing to be active were bound to be disillusioned by the youth organizations, which either continued into the 1990s from the Soviet period or were in the process of establishment in the first part of the decade. The post-Soviet institutions retained older conservative leaders, who lacked conviction about the abilities of the youth to generate ideas, manage activities, time and money. They limited the activities to a narrow range, concentrating on sports events, art exhibitions and cultural performances. The organizations catered to the select

\(^{72}\) Moldova. NGOs and Civil Society, see, Online Web: http://www.worldbank.org.md.html
\(^{73}\) Ibid.
few, providing recognition to the children of rich parents who could make financial contributions. The youth associations emerging in the early 1990s at universities and political parties did not help to develop civic activism, either. Political parties treated affiliated youth organizations as vote and membership generators and allegations were made of the infiltration of the ranks of student organizations by state security apparatus. Finally, the organizations did not represent the majority of the youth, which lived in rural areas, as they were located almost exclusively in Chisinau and other major cities. International agencies, such as Council of Europe, UNICEF, the representations of Western governments (embassies) and charities (e.g. Save the Children) have played a key role in reforming the youth movement, which accounts for greater activism of the youth in general, and the rural and marginal groups, in particular. At present nearly a quarter of the beneficiaries of nongovernmental sector in Moldova are children and teenagers. Currently 37 organizations, stimulating youth activism in various fields, are members of the reorganized National Youth Council. A measure of progress is the fact that seven organizations had to leave the Council when they could not demonstrate activity in the field. Other signs of qualitative progress toward developing a healthier sector include: learning the standards through observation and horizontal contacts with similar structures, external and mutual monitoring (from the Council of Europe and inside the National Youth Council), expansion into the countryside, opening up the resources to non-institutional actors (resource centers, youth initiatives), stress on electoral process and transparency, maintaining cooperation with the Transnistrian NGOs and publishing their work. But many problems remain. It must be noted, nonetheless, that the youth organization sector is vibrant enough to address some of these issues on its own, as the following initiatives demonstrate. European Youth Exchange Moldova and the Center for Documentation and Information on Children's Rights have worked within the project “Youth participation in local administration” on two components of civic education. First, in collaboration with the Ministry for Youth and Sports, the two organizations have offered trainings in children's rights to social workers in local administration. Second, they have placed consultants in regional youth NGO resource centers to assist emerging youth leaders of local initiatives. Through establishment of

74 Ibid.
youth initiatives, which do not require official registration but are democratically set up and governed, youth leaders may learn the electoral process by doing it. Four sessions of the Children’s Parliament, each involving 110 participants, have also been held in Chisinau, bringing together representatives from the entire country to identify the priorities for actions for the local and national administration and the NGO sector. Apart from education and sports, child rights were prominent. For the 15 percent of active youth leaders, trainings are open when they turn 18 on how to train other leaders and how to establish their own NGOs. Other organizations specialize in trainings in civic rights and conflict resolution. For instance, Center for Associative Democracy ADEPT conducts trainings on democratic procedures for the party-affiliated youth organizations. Youth Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly provides space for the dialogue of the youth from both sides of the Dniester in its journal "Collage," where particular emphasis is placed on the value of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. It is noteworthy that the journal is fully trilingual, running parallel sections in English, Romanian and Russian. Young people are a key audience for the practical human rights education available at LADOM (League for Defense of Human Rights), which was founded on local initiative in 1996. Young people have been mobilized as election observers and as many as 2000 persons watched the last local elections thanks to the support of Soros Foundation and U.S. Embassy. Around one hundred volunteers support the center, with the prominent participation of law students, who serve as legal consultants for the marginal groups, such as the refugees or victims of trafficking.

Public awareness campaigns and human rights: If youth sector has managed to broaden the appeal of civic education and popularize human rights, the organizations working on these issues have recorded a relatively small impact on the wider public in Moldova for two reasons. First, little public support can be rallied for civic rights due to the general passivity and lack of confidence in influencing the authorities. Second, the position of the NGOs vis-à-vis the administration is precarious, and intimidation of individual activists and of the entire organizations effectively limits the appeal of open

75 Ibid.
76 “Civil Society Development and Democratic Values in Romania and Moldova” See Online Web: http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/uslaner/eepsbadescusumuslaner.doc.
criticism of human rights record of the government to the few professional organizations whose plight is closely monitored by their Western audience. As a result, the non-governmental sector's activities in the field of human rights are restricted to publishing the information on the situation in human rights in Moldova for foreign audiences. Human rights organizations are not growing and remain oriented towards Western and not national audience. There is a generally low level of confidence in the Moldovan society in the ability of non-elites to take effective part in public life and the level of confidence tends to decrease over time. Low levels of confidence cannot influence the important decisions made at national level. Thus, the civil society in Moldova has much to accomplish in this respect. However, NGOs do not enjoy sufficient recognition in the wider public. The mistrust toward non-governmental organizations is most pervasive in the rural areas, affecting particularly the NGOs working with local government. This problem was addressed by some NGO resource centers such as CONTACT, which quickly moved from building the capacity of local non-governmental organizations to supporting programs of community development. Civil society efforts at close cooperation with the local administration had to begin with lobbying for setting up and maintaining a decentralized and transparent system of governance. Conditions of access to the legislative process of reform were dependent on the will of the authorities. The decentralization undertaken in 1997 was preceded, on the one hand, by a series of public debates and regional roundtables in which officials, members of the Moldovan Parliament, judges, local and central government representatives and NGO representatives took part. Discussions were also held on draft laws of local administration and administrative territorial reform, producing proposals, which could be then submitted to parliamentary committees. The Young Lawyers' Association of Moldova and National Agency coordinated the initiative for Local and Regional Development with the assistance from the Information and Documentation Center of the Council of Europe and the Eurasia Foundation. On the other hand, the current Communist government has been avoiding the scrutiny of civil society to its centralization programme, refusing to discuss the costs and rationales for the reform.

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Angry attacks were made in the state-controlled press on the organizations, which had publicized a study denying the government’s claims of cost-free character of the reforms. Even some of the prominent NGO leaders were intimidated by security service so that the report would not be made public.\textsuperscript{78}

**Human Rights:** The adoption of Moldova’s constitution adopted on 29 July 1994, codified certain basic human rights including the rights to private property, individual freedom and personal security, freedom of movement, privacy of correspondence, freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of assembly, which were observed more in the breach during the Soviet era. Article 32 of the Constitution of Moldova, guarantees the freedom of speech and the right on information. Every citizen is guaranteed the freedom of speech, thought and opinion and their public expression in words, paintings or by other means; the right of any person to obtain public information cannot be restricted. Article 5 dictates the inadmissibility of censorship. There is also a parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. Moldova has also several local human rights groups, which maintain contacts with international organizations, including Helsinki Watch and Helsinki Citizens Assembly. The government does not interfere with these human rights groups operations.\textsuperscript{79}

However, the Moldova constitution still contains language that could limit the activities of political parties and the press. In 1994 Parliament considered a new law on the press, which journalists criticized strongly because it limited their right to criticize government policies. After reviewing recommendations from the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), Parliament liberalized the law but left some restrictions that appear to be aimed at writings favoring reunification with Romania and those questioning Moldova’s right to exist. Thus, in practice, although there is not government censorship on Moldova’s independent press, radio stations and cable television stations but journalists often complain that editors encourage them to soften their criticisms of government officials for fear of confrontation and possible retribution. This seems to be a well-grounded fear in Transnistria, where the authorities

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{79} For details see, Online Web: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy.
have cut off funding for two newspapers for occasionally criticizing some government policies and have physically attacked a cable television station for broadcasting reports critical of the authorities. The Moldovan Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of National Security were investigated on several occasions in 1994 as to whether they had exceeded their legislated authority. They were accused of monitoring political opposition members and using unauthorized wiretaps. There were also claims of interference with opposition activities during the campaign preceding the 1994 elections, but there was no public investigation of those charges. The police, subordinate to the Ministry of Interior, are known to use beatings in their dealings with some detainees and prisoners. Reform of the judiciary, to bring it more into line with Western practices, was approved but Parliament had not passed the laws needed to implement it. For example, prosecutors rather than judges issue search and arrest warrants, there is no judicial review of search warrants, and courts do not exclude evidence obtained illegally. There are also reports that local prosecutors have brought unjustified charges against individuals in retaliation for accusations of official corruption or for political reasons.80

Because the security forces and the government of the "Dniestr Republic" are so closely connected, human rights abuses in Transnistria are more flagrant. The worst of the abuses in Transnistria occurred in 1992, during the height of the fighting. There were reports of beatings, ill treatment, abduction, torture, and even the murder of civilians by members of the police and the so-called Republic Guard. Requests for visits by Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross were routinely refused. In Transnistria four of the six ethnic Romanians of the "Tiraspol Six" remain in prison following their conviction in 1993 for allegedly assassinating two Transnistrian officials. International human rights groups seriously questioned the fairness of the trial, and there were allegations that the defendants were prosecuted solely because of their membership in the CDPF.81

Corruption: Corruption is quite widespread in the republic of Moldova. As of mid-1997, 76 police officers and 32 senior officials at the ministry had been fired, and 50 criminal cases had been filed against police with seven sentenced thus far. In July 1997, for example, all four chief officers of the traffic police were fired after an Interior Ministry investigation revealed they were taking bribes. The extent of corruption was highlighted in 1996 when the Justice Minister was stopped in Austria driving a stolen car.\textsuperscript{82} In a major case in May 1997, authorities charged Minister of Privatization Ceslav Ciobanu with selling off a state sanitarium to a university founded by his wife. In 1996, the government ordered the interior ministry to form a department to fight crime and corruption. By mid-year, all civil servants were required to declare revenues, bank accounts, and other assets. The Minister of the interior under Mihail Plamadeala launched an anti-corruption campaign in February 1997. In April 1997, President Lucinschi issued decrees, which established the Department for Organized Crime and Corruption Prevention within the Ministry of the Interior. In July 1997, the Moldovan Constitutional Court declared these decrees to be unconstitutional. The court ruled that the creation of such new departments was the prerogative of the legislative branch. Transparency International did not rank Moldova in its most recent (1997) survey.\textsuperscript{83}

Freedom of Media in Moldova: The print media market in Moldova is very politicized for two reasons: first, because newspapers cannot support themselves financially without a political patronage and second, due to direct forms of intimidation. As there is close connection between business and government, opposition newspapers are not used for advertising. Newspapers therefore have to depend on political parties or are owned by business people. This further undermines the independence of their views. A survey of 124 media organizations, undertaken in November 2002, indicates the perception of a high level of politicization in the ranks of the journalists. Only one percent of journalists believe that the field is not politicized, while 85 percent strongly disagree. Top reasons given for politicization of the media in the eyes of the journalists themselves are: "precarious economic condition of newspapers" (46 percent), "lack of conditions for the development of independent media" (29 percent) and "lack of mechanisms for economic

\textsuperscript{82} Corruption in Moldova, see, Online Web: http://www.transparency.md/about.htm
protection of journalists” (13 percent). In the Republic of Moldova the current level of media consumption is not very high. Press circulation, especially in rural areas, is limited. There are even areas characterized by informational void, signaled by mass media (e.g. Ocnita sector), to which contributed the liquidation of the local cable and national radio broadcasting stations. The press reaches a small fraction of the population. Television remains the preferred media type for 61 percent, followed by radio (27 percent) and the press (only 6.2 percent and another one percent favoring both the press and the other outlet). Half of all the respondents watch TV daily, while only about 10 percent read newspapers every day. On the other hand, as many as 31 percent urban dwellers and 40 percent rural residents have not read a newspaper in the past three months, compared to 15 percent who have not watched domestic TV broadcast.35 State-owned television and radio command virtual monopoly on the news provision to the population. Nearly a half of all the respondents (47.7 percent) pointed to the state TV news as their top choice, compared to 5.4 percent going to the most popular independent news program (ProTV). Independent news can contest the state broadcast only in the urban areas (where proportions are 11.3 percent to 35.1 percent, but not in the countryside where two independent station news have attracted one percent each, while the state TV is the top choice for over 57 percent).84 Serious debate on issues of public interest is lacking in print media as well. Periodical publications print runs registered in 2001 are relatively low. The total annual print run of the 233 existing newspapers amounted to 45018 copies. 80 journals were published with a total annual print run of 1982 thousand copies. On this market where many newspapers compete over a small pool of revenue and no leaders have emerged to dictate the standards of the trade, newspapers cater to relatively unsophisticated readers. The main problem is the size of the market, and consequently, dependency from sponsors. The eclectic tabloid format of most socio-political weeklies (which dominate the newspaper market), where serious news analyses are placed side by side with sensationalism, indicates that they aim at recruiting as many readers as possible rather than serving a well-defined segment.85 However, the unwillingness to conduct


85 Ibid.
serious debate in public media and challenge the politician’s statements has other reasons as well. Journalists resort to the self-censorship of their publications for fear of losing their jobs. Situation worsened when after the victory of the Communist party in 2001, the new government has tried to subordinate the media. The National Ethics Commission of the Journalists’ Union stated its concern about censorship, “which since the change of the political power became manifest at public TV and radio stations and government publications”. In particular, the Commission decried “the dictatorial politics pursued by the governing party at the Teleradio Moldova state company, by means of personnel dismissal, suspending certain broadcasts of political interest, by emphasizing the realities favorable only to this party, which leads to the indoctrination of society and to the suppression of political liberties. Such policies are unfortunately left unchecked. Journalists complain of difficult access to information, as stated in a survey carried out in September-October 2001 by the Center for the Promotion of the Freedom of Speech and Access to Information. According to this survey’s data the least transparent public issues include: use of the credits obtained from abroad (indicated by 46.2 percent of those questioned), corruption (77.9 percent), specific use of budgetary resources (39.5 percent) privatization issues and public official’s salaries and privileges. According to 48.1 percent of respondents of the given questionnaire, they were denied access to the required information for no reason. 85 percent of journalists surveyed in November 2002 were not satisfied with the degree of access to public information, and a quarter of all respondents found the access to be “inadmissibly difficult.” The overwhelming majority has encountered difficulties with the national government and its agencies or the Presidential office. Public authorities also take active part in distorting the contents of information. The media must publish materials prepared by the presidential press center according to law and failure to do so might initiate prosecution. In the course of the last local elections state-run mass media have blatantly favored the government candidates, while the president violated the pre-election silence by calling for voting against an opposition leader for the mayor of Chisinau. In response to the question “how do you think which institutions use mass media to manipulate the public opinion” 82.6 percent of journalists

listed in this category political parties, mainly during the election campaigns, while 32 percent of respondents believed that this was characteristic of authorities and public institutions in general. Self-censorship of journalists' work may be attributed to the general anxiety about the stability of their jobs. Most common fears include: losing employment and government intimidation. Around 36 percent of journalists work without having a contract with their media outlet. Cases of direct pressure and illegal state intervention have been recorded in the form of unlawful office searches or administrative orders to close down activity. The majority of the surveyed journalists do not feel protected against persecution, threat or pressure as a result of their professional activity (60 percent "not at all", 35 percent "partially" and only 5 percent feels "fully protected.").

The problems cited in the context of the Republic of Moldova are incomparably more severe in Transnistria, which is a separate media market from that of the Republic of Moldova. The Transnistrian media scene became monopolized by the separatist authorities between 1995-1997. The government and its ally, the trade unions, set up their own newspapers while the dominant state-related capital group Sheriff launched a network for broadcasting 20 TV channels, mainly from Russia. In the situation when the only independent TV station, ARM-TV, stopped broadcasting in 2001 once the Russian government decided to discontinue funding, the authorities felt free to stop the information critical to the power group. The information blockade was particularly severe in the run-up to the presidential elections of December 2001. Foreign coverage critical to the government was taken off the air, and the newspaper representing the contending Party of People's Power, Glas Truda, was boycotted by printing houses and its copies were confiscated on the border so that it had to discontinue. Attempts at closing down a successful independent newspaper, Novaya Gazeta (established in 1998), ranged from frequent thorough examinations of its accounts through unlawful confiscations (including searches of the premises) to attempts at closing the paper administratively. Novaya Gazeta has survived as the only independent socio-political newspaper circulated

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87 Ibid.
throughout Transnistria. There are no independent broadcast media in Transnistria. Media is being discussed in detail in the next section.

**Media:** The Moldovan media, both official and independent, testify to a laudable plurality of opinion. The opposition press is not restricted, almost every party has its press organ and there is no official censorship anymore. The authorities in Moldova have not interfered directly into the operation of independent media outlets, which can function more or less unconstrained in the country. Nonetheless, it should be said that the state distribution company *Moldpresa* still trusts the market, which the so-called 'house of the press' is under the control of the state and that several independent or oppositional publications have complained about discrimination, especially in the provinces. What is desperately lacking is financial means in the media, which could allow more economic independence and investigative reporting. However, it may be thwarted both by residual caution on the part of government officials declining to give information, and by logistical and market constraints imposed by the generally chaotic financial situation of both official and independent media. It has led to a rather politicized printed press; the need for sponsors and support makes it particularly difficult for unaligned papers to survive.

The state-controlled broadcast media have difficulties to inform the population objectively on the country's most important issues. They are still influenced by the political authorities governing the country. However, the intention to transform the state-broadcaster into a public broadcaster as laid down in the law on TV and radio, may change, or at least better the situation. The constitution, the law on the press and on TV and radio, in combination with the structure of the Coordination Council on broadcasting, provide a basis for autonomy and promote pluralism. However, several articles in the Criminal and Civil Code and in the law on the Press are fairly arbitrary about the limitations to the freedom of press have led to court cases regarding defamation and can therefore be used to muzzle the press. However, some journalists lack professionalism as

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89 *Europa Year Book*, n. 5, p. 2739.
said by Valeriu Sahameanu, the president of the Journalists Union of Moldova. Their attacks, based on emotion rather than on solid argument, are often easy prey for prosecutors.90

Press freedom is guaranteed in the constitution and made operational through the Press Law of 1994 the constitution disallows disputing or defaming the State and the people. These restrictions, however, have not been implemented in law or otherwise enforced. The press law does allow politicians to sue for defamation without distinguishing between their public and private affairs. The suits that have been brought to trial have generally failed. Thus, Media in Moldova has played an important role for the society; however, it is not satisfactory and it is still evolving in the desired direction.91

Constitutional Provisions: The constitution and the law ‘on the press’ and ‘on the TV and radio’, in combination with the structure of the Coordination Council on broadcasting, provide a basis for autonomy and promote pluralism in Media. However, several articles in the Criminal and Civil Code and in the law ‘on the Press’ are fairly arbitrary about the limitations to the freedom of press. They have led to court cases regarding defamation and thus used to muzzle the press. The main statute regulating the print media and news agencies is the law on the press adopted by parliament on 26 October 1994. It lays down the legal framework for the activities of the print media (right to found media outlets, operate them, acquire and operate technical devices and equipment, intended for distribution of media products).92 Article 1 of the law prohibits anyone to interfere in the editorial activity; the law also reinforces the inadmissibility of censorship. According to Article 5, foreign citizens or entities can co-find print media or news services with a share not exceeding 49 per cent of the stock. Several shortcomings concerning the law ‘on the press’ surfaced since it went into force. However, some were corrected since then. According to critics, Article 4 is restrictive, particularly the ban on publications, which defame the state and people of the country, could be subject to arbitrary interpretations. Secondly, at the end of 1995, parliament amended the law to

90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 For details see, Online Web: http://csawiki.undp.sk/index.php/Moldova.
simplify the complicated and costly registration procedure for print media outlets and news agencies, which had led to bureaucratic misuse (some applications for registration were turned down). Thirdly, the arbitrary nature of tax benefits was corrected. In the first version of the law, Article 12.3 stipulated that some print media outlets were exempted partly or fully from paying taxes. The word some of course created an important leverage for the administration. Following a parliamentary amendment, all print media outlets can be partly or fully exempt from paying taxes. The law on the 1996 state budget stipulates that all print media outlets pay only 50 per cent of Value Added Tax (VAT). Moreover, Moldova does not have a law on the Access to Information, which would be instrumental in obtaining information from inaccessible civil servants. The current parliamentary rule regarding the presence of journalists during sessions of the permanent Committees is that on request of 15 per cent of the MP's, the press can be denied access. It has been used, which caused critics to remark that they were restricted in obtaining information.

Meanwhile, the parliament adopted some of the proposals for amendments. Article 4 was changed into a prohibition of materials that contradict the provisions of the Constitution. However, defamation and humiliation of the dignity of people remained liable to penalties, except in the case of publications with major public importance or if the author genuinely believed the accuracy on the day of the publication. However, the then president of Moldova, Mr. Snegur, vetoed the amendments. They were considered 'contradictory to some provisions of the Constitution', allowing slander and permitting accusations before someone is found guilty (instead of the principle of presumed innocence). In April 1996 the parliament unanimously voted for the abolition of the article 203/6 of the Criminal Code and several MP's stated that the parliament should once again try to pass the amendments, considering Moldova signed the European Convention on human rights. On 3 October 1995, the parliament adopted the law on TV and radio. It was considered by legal experts a major step forward. The law envisions the

93 For details see, Online Web: http://www.e-fs.net/index.asp.
transformation of state broadcasting into public and private broadcasting and also stipulates general mechanisms for the establishment of independent broadcasters.  

Several other laws have indirect relevance to the media but are not always positive. Article 203/6 of the Criminal Code stipulates the criminal punishment for defamation of the parliament speaker and president of the Republic. According to the Article 7 of the Civil Code, any private person or legal entity has the right refute information, which humiliates the dignity of a person and is defamatory. Article 7a stipulates significant fines, up to 200 minimal salaries, for what is defined as misuse of the media. In November 1995, a group of MPs initiated the legislative amendment of Article 4 of the law ‘on the press’ and Articles 7 and 7a of the Civil Code and to abolish Article 203-6 of the Criminal Code. The proposals followed recommendations from Council of Europe legal experts. Additionally, they called for a clearer definition of the word 'misuse' and for more reasonable fines.

According to the Supreme Court, in the first half of 1995 there were 60 lawsuits against media outlets regarding defamation. Fines of up to $800 were given. The majority of cases deal with issues of dignity and honour. As said, Articles 7 and 7a of the Civil Code and Article 4 of the law on the press put journalists in an unfavorable position. Till recently, the clear majority of court cases concerning defamation ended in victory of the plaintiff. In fact, suing a publication for libel appears to have become one of the most efficient means for silencing the independent media. Journalists feel they have very few judicial mechanisms to dispute decisions of civil servants (e.g. not providing information, dismissal). In one case, the Head of the state TV and Radio Company repeatedly dismissed two journalists. Yet each time they appealed to court and were reinstated. On the whole, however, the legislative and judicial system has not work much to the advantage of journalists.

State Control over Media: There are several bodies, which directly or indirectly participate in the legislation and regulation of the media. The parliamentary Committee

95 Ibid.
96 Parliament and Civil Society, see, Online Web: http://www.irex.org/media/moldova/index.asp.
97 Government and Civil Society, see, Online Web: http://www.rferl.org/newslinelfulltext.asp.
on education, science and the mass media draft and reviews the laws. The Ministry of Justice registers press organizations and news agencies. Licenses for private TV are granted and revoked by the Coordination Council on Broadcasting. This council consists of 9 members appointed by the parliament, the president, and the government. The members are not responsible to the bodies that appointed them and serve only as guarantors of the public interests. Their membership can be revoked if they violate the law ‘on TV and radio’ or other laws. The Ministry of Communication allocates frequencies to broadcasters.\(^98\)

The branches of power continue to exercise control over other outlets founded or cofounded by the national and local administrations. The government appoints senior management and state subsidies are only granted to these outlets like state TV and Radio Company Teleradio-Moldova, newspapers Moldova Suverane and Nezavisimaya Moldova. The control can be illustrated with the case of newspaper Moldova Suverane. The 70 years old publication with the circulation of about 90,000, declared itself independent from the state on 24 October 1994. The government forced the journalists to leave the premises, confiscated all the equipment and means of transportation and ordered the publishing house Universal to stop printing the paper. Only 72 hours after the declaration, Moldova Suverane was again incorporated in the state structure.\(^99\)

As stated, there has been quite a lot of criticism regarding the applicable laws, in particular the possibilities for lawsuits against libel. In addition, the INGO Reporters sans frontiers have found faults with the law on TV and Radio. The law does not allow foreigners to launch TV and Radio stations and obliges electronic media to give priority in coverage of state structures, according to RSF. Whilst perhaps not perfect, on the positive side, the laws have undoubtedly created better working conditions for journalists. Moreover, the media have been de-monopolized. An important advantage, since, for instance, individuals or legal entities now have the right to run a publishing business. This can take away an important leverage governments in other CIS countries have. Nonetheless, it should be said that the state distribution company Moldpresa still trusts

\(^{98}\) Electronic Media and Civil Society, see, Online Web: http://www.rferl.org/newsline/fulltext.asp.
the market, that independent printing plants are limited, that the so-called 'house of the press' is under the control of the state and that several independent or oppositional publications have complained about discrimination, especially in the provinces. The authorities in Moldova have not interfered directly into the operation of independent media outlets, which can function more or less unconstrained in the country. The intention of transforming the state broadcaster into a public broadcaster is another positive sign.100

One incident in the relation between the media and the government deserves to be mentioned, in particular since it caused major commotion and overshadowed the election campaign. In what has been called Moldovan Watergate, the state-owned national television broadcast an illegally recorded telephone conversation between Deputy Nicolae Andronic, chief of President Mircea Snegur's electoral campaign, and Alexandru Burian, Moldova's ambassador to Germany. The recording discredited Snegur, in particular since his aides were discussing to use unaccounted money to support the incumbent president's campaign. It caused Snegur to demand for the resignation of the director of Teleradio Moldova and the director of the TV channel. The president also alleged that state TV was fully controlled by his rivals. Indeed, the general director, Adrian Usatii, had publicly expressed his support for Petru Lucinschi. Not directly related to the government, yet an important feature of the media landscape in Moldova is the political alignment of most media outlets. There are relatively few genuinely independent outlets. Generally, political parties or political structures directly or indirectly finance them. There are 22 registered publications of political parties alone. Consequently, the media, in particular the print media, is rather politicized.101

**Media Structures:** The Moldovan media structure is growing and the people are using to obtain the information source. A total number 34 television stations, 10 radio station, 69 magazines, 9 news-agencies (1 in Transnistria) and 170 newspapers are registered in Moldova. Of the newspapers, only 60 are regularly published, of which about 40 are regional publications. Moldova's state-run news-agency, Moldpress, has been forced to

100 Electronic Media and Civil Society, see, Online Web: http://www.rferl.org/newsline/fulltext.asp.
101 Media in Moldova, see, Online Web: http://www.cpj.org/attacks00/europe00/Moldova.html.
adapt a completely different political and informational context. It also faces an increasing competition from several newly launched independent news agencies, which succeeded in carving out niches of credibility. The oldest and the most serious is Basa-Press, launched in November 1992. It publishes daily news bulletins in Romanian and in English language, as well as weekly political commentaries. Its main competitor is InfoTag, created in November 1993, which provides information on political and economic developments in Moldova in Romanian and English, but also in Russian, which attracts a non-negligible part of the readers. The average wage in the country is $75. Journalists earn slightly more, on average $100. Nonetheless, hidden advertising is (particularly in the press) a widespread phenomenon. There are some non-media companies with stakes in the private media (Katalan, Neftegasgroup, Tatiana), but the investments are not declared. Advertising, partial purchases of local media, joint ventures, subsidies or establishing branches are the main forms of foreign investment in Media but no data is available in this regard.102

**Broadcast Media:** Moldova has a very specific television landscape. Because it is a former Soviet Republic, all the TV-sets are still technically able to receive the Russian Public Television (ORT), and in the morning the Ukrainian state TV - although broadcasts of the latter was suspended in March 1997 because the channel failed in paying its debts since July 1996. The first national Romanian channel (TVR) is available. The presence of these foreign channels considerably minimizes the influence of the state Moldovan channel (TVM). Reliable sociological research about the TV audience shows that TVM is indeed not the most popular channel (16.6 per cent of audience share). The national radio and television stations are functioning as a joint company called Teleradio Moldova, subsidized by the state and receiving revenues from advertising. The political authorities are reluctant to abandon their control over it, which obviously affects the quality of the programs. The parliament, the government and the presidential administration govern the content, which also make up the Coordination Council.103 The news and current affairs programs of the state TV can, according to observers, not be considered objective.

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103 See, Online Web: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles.stm
However, during the recent presidential elections, debates were organized with the nine candidates (before the first round) and between Mircea Snegur and Petru Lucinschi (two days before the second round of voting). Radio Moldova is the less controversial part of Tele radio Moldova. It has always tried to stay out of politics and stick to the facts. Several independent radio stations have been launched in the past two years, like Radio Unda Libera and Radio Nova. They are mostly commercial music stations, offering music and entertainment shows much more than news or political analysis. Independent TV stations have been launched before and after the law On TV and radio entered into force on 3 October 1995. According to Inter news, there are 3 rather professional private TV stations in the country. They depend for income on sponsors/founders and revenues from advertising. Catalan TV (CTV) was the first and started on 21 August 1995. It was set up with money from a private commercial company that operates gasoline stations and hired most staff from Teleradio Moldova. CTV repeatedly stated its intention to stay out of politics by avoiding bias. Soon after its inauguration, the station registered its first success abroad, by winning two prizes at the International Independent TV Festival in Kosice, Slovakia. At home, however, its impact has remained rather limited. This can be explained in the first place by technical reasons, since the program can be received only within a radius of 35-45 kilometers around the Moldovan capital of Chisinau. In January 1996, the assistant manager of the CTV was kidnapped, never to reappear since. The perpetrators were not found. In May 1996, the channel suspended broadcasting of its news and current affairs program for ten days. According to Tara - the mouthpiece of the main pro-Romanian opposition party FPCD - the forthcoming presidential election triggered a fierce battle among the various political groups interested in taking over the control at CTV in order to step up their influence in public life. Gheorghe Straisteanu, the head of the Catalan Society, confirmed that the station was under constant pressure from state bodies and top officials from the parliament, presidential office and government. The channel’s director, Valeriu Frumusachi, pledged that CTV would remain a non-political, purely commercial enterprise. The leading private radio stations are RFI (French radio), Radio-Nova, Polidisc, Micul Libera (Moldovan University) and Eldorado. They broadcast music and entertainment and are not focused on politics.104

104 See, Online Web: http://www.vii.org/monroe/issue56/moldova.htm
Print Media: The print media in Moldova are varied. The Ministry of Justice has registered approximately 170 publications but only a third of them is available. This is mainly due to the fact that most newspapers have to contend with strong financial and logistical problems. Since Moldova gained its independence, rising paper prices have resulted in reductions of circulation (the average circulation is 8,000 daily). The market's main characteristic is that weeklies sell better than dailies, which have rather low print runs. There are only two government-funded publications: a Romanian-language one, Moldova Suverana, and a Russian-language one, Nezavisimaya Moldova. They are the successors of respectively Moldova Socialist and Sovetskaya Moldova and each have a circulation of 15,000 daily. In the course of the recent presidential election campaign, Moldova Suverana backed candidate-prime minister Andrei Sangheli, and Nezavisimaya Moldova reported particularly negative about incumbent president Mircea Snegur. On 3 March, the government decided to dismiss Andrei Hropotinschi, the editor in chief Moldova suverana. in fact, he had announced on 15 February that he would resign on grounds of his strong backing of former Premier Andrei Sangheli. Party publications are still very important in Moldova. The ruling party before the recent presidential elections (PDAM) has its own press organ: Pamint & Oameni (in Romanian) and Zemlya & Lyudi (in Russian). With 39,000 and 17,000 subscriptions respectively, they both have the largest number of subscriber's nation-wide. The top-selling Romanian-language independent weekly Saptamina prints over 70,000 copies. The daily I, published by the same company, has a print run of only 3,000 copies. On the other hand there is Tara (12,000 subscribers), published by the main opposition party, the FPCD. The United Democratic Congress publishes Mesagerul, the Republican Party publishes Moldovanul, the Socialist's Party's Romanian-Russian organ is responsible for Dreptate/Spravedlivost, the Communist Party publishes Communistul, the Party of Liberal Democracy publishes Libertatea, and the Social Democratic Party produces the paper 'Republica'. Many Moldovan publications claim to be independent, yet do not genuinely deserve the qualification. The weekly 'Literatura si Arta' for example, linked in the past with the Moldovan Writers' Union, is now independent but very close to the Christian Democratic

Popular Front (FPCD), the main opposition organization. Clearly, the print media in Moldova are rather politicized.\textsuperscript{106}

\textbf{Media in the Regions:} The state television channels, TVR (Romanian) and ORT (Russian) reach beyond the capital. In addition, there are some state channels operative in the provinces (Chadyrlunga, Komrat). Private TV is not, according to our (unconfirmed) information, visible in the regions. All national newspapers and magazines, as well as some Romanian and Moscow-based publications are sold (retail) in the regions. In addition, there are about 40 regional and 10 city newspapers. These newspapers depend heavily on the money received from the local executive authorities.\textsuperscript{107}

\textbf{Professional Organizations:} The Journalists' Union of Moldova is the only professional association for Moldovan journalists. It was founded in 1958, subordinated to the Communist Party bodies, but after 1990 it changed its position. Currently, it aims to safeguard the freedom of the press and help the economic independence of journalists. The Union is a member of the IFJ and is strong and popular. Around 1,500 of the estimated 3,000 Moldovan journalists are associated with it but it lacks financial means to genuinely function as a trade union.\textsuperscript{108}

\textbf{Role of Media:} The news services in Moldova are independent and provide relatively objective coverage. Three independent news agencies, Infotag, Basapress, and Flux, plus the government-controlled Mold press, provide material for the traditional media outlets as well as domestic and international e-mail customers.\textsuperscript{109} Many of the newspapers are published by the political parties and express a particular point-of-view. However, they are free from governmental control. The state-owned papers, Moldova Suverana and Nezavisimaya Moldova, often acted as participants rather than objective sources in the 1996 presidential election. Both serious challengers, parliamentary speaker Lucinschi and Prime Minister Sangheli, received more favorable coverage from the government-controlled print and broadcast outlets than did the incumbent, President Snegur. For

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} See, Online Web: Media Agencies, http://www.moldpres.md.

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example, in a major scandal, national television broadcast an illegally recorded conversation between two of Snegur's top aides in an attempt to embarrass the ex-president. Most newspapers are printed by the state printing organization. However, this system has not inhibited opposition media. The kiosk-based distribution system that is used does not appear to serve any particular political interest.¹¹⁰

Media outlets not controlled by the state or the political parties are growing in number but are still relatively few.¹¹¹ Television and radio are largely controlled by the state owned Teleradio-Moldova. Private Catalan TV debuted in 1995, but its transmissions are limited to Chisinau and 40 kilometers around it. Locally owned radio is also growing slowly. There is only one private radio station, which broadcasts religious material out of Chisinau. Non-governmental sources are providing an increasing share of the information and are limited more by economic factors than by governmental attempts to restrict information. As in all the post-Communist states, the media have little experience with business operations and thus, are experiencing start-up difficulties. Similarly newspapers including that of Political parties are short of both cash and management experience. Advertising support is also limited, and papers often lose money by increasing circulation. A new media group, the Association of Independent Press, was launched in October 1997. Its goal is to help finance private media in Moldova.¹¹² There were attacks and pressure as well on the journalists and media persons. In 1996, five men in police uniforms kidnapped Ion Frunza, the deputy head of Catalan TV. Three journalists for *Mesagerul*, the party newspaper of the Alliance of Democratic Forces, were beaten in January. Two of them were threatened with death if they continued to write about police involvement in a racketeering ring. Further, in November 1997, two top directors of Tele radio, Adrian Usatii and Dumitru Turcanu, were replaced after months of fighting in parliament. The Moldovan parliament amended the Law on the Electronic Media in December 1997, and Article 7 was changed to regularize parliamentary power of dismissal over the heads of the state television and radio agencies. President Lucinschi, arguing that this violated the constitution, vetoed the amendment. The veto was

overturned later that month. Thus, in spite of some censorship as a result of 1995-press law, which forbids contesting or defaming the Moldovan people, the state interference with is not a problem. Though the state-owned media outlets were hardly neutral in the election campaign but more or less the media in Moldova have become increasingly open and competitive.113

Development of Democratic Institutions in Moldova: A sequence of events since 1991 determined the political development of Moldova. Lack of consensus on independence among all national minorities made consolidation of the Moldovan statehood difficult and left the process of democratization of the political system in a transitory stage. The presidency, parliament, system of central and local government, administrative structure and electoral code have all been subject to many changes over the last decade in a campaign mode. Although the country adopted a new constitution in 1994 and has gone through three cycles of free elections to various level of national and local government, Moldova is still viewed as a weak state with weak governmental institutions. The 1994 Constitution provided for separation of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. However, locus of power in the Moldovan political system has long been characterized by tension between the legislature and the executive. President Lucinschi tried to transform Moldova into a presidential republic in 2000. However, he failed to get the support of the Parliament. Instead, the Parliament amended the constitution on 5 July 2000, strengthening the powers of the legislative and abolishing direct presidential elections. Elected by the Parliament, the President nominates the Prime Minister, based on the distribution of party power in the Parliament. Paradoxically enough, constitutional amendments combined with the outcome of February 2001 parliamentary elections brought a major change in the balance of power toward presidency. The Communists secured 71 of 101 seats in the legislative (a constitutional majority) and elected their party leader, Vladimir Voronin as President of Moldova.114 Although the last elections reveal some limits to their ability for full control over the Moldovan politics,


shortcomings observed during the campaign remain a source of concerns. Most importantly, there are few real checks and balances in the new political system. It raises concerns that a consolidation of democracy in Moldova could come under threat. Political changes of 2001 affected also the structure of local government, which was introduced by the 1999 administrative reforms. Furthermore, the number of municipalities and communes rose from 644 to 907, again reversing the 1999 reform. These amendments to the law on local administration have been interpreted as a sign of perpetual efforts of Communists to set up a vertical power structure. Moreover, many analysts and observers have qualified the electoral campaign as the dirtiest one since independence. A significant number of observers voiced concerns about abuse of power by the ruling party and bias in the media in favour of government. Over the past decade Moldova has a good record with regards to national elections. Despite some shortcomings, elections were labeled as "free and fair". The main legal basis for the conduct elections and referenda is the electoral code, adopted in November 1997 and amended several times afterwards. The amendments, which were passed in 2001, raised the threshold to 6 percent for parties, 9 percent for coalitions of two parties, and 12 percent for a coalition of three or more parties. In effect, only three parties managed to clear the threshold and got parliamentary mandates. Almost one third of the vote's casts were lost under those conditions. However, the most important problem stems from the fact that Moldova's electoral system has discouraged the creation of strong and stable parties linked to clear constituencies. Moldova's proportional representation system has functioned on the basis of a closed party list ballot, with the entire country considered a single electoral district. This creates few incentives for parties to reach out to distinct constituencies, or for politicians, once elected to feel a sense of obligation towards the voters who put them in office. Calls for the introduction of a mixed electoral system that would incorporate some single member constituencies into the present system of party voting have failed. It is worth to mention that the new system has been recently described as a pseudo parliamentary system. Communists have benefited from the present system of party-voting lists and are not interested in electoral reforms. Under the current legislation the process of the registration of a political party in Moldova is rather simple

(new parties should collect 5000 signatures of supporters). Currently 26 political parties are registered by Ministry of Justice and are entitled to participate in elections.\textsuperscript{116}

Since 1991 Moldova has established a judicial system and a basic legislative framework for justice administration. The Constitutional Court is actively involved in examining petitions from state and judicial bodies. The Supreme Court periodically issues interpretations of current legislation by courts. The criminal code was amended in 2001 in a progressive manner. Moldovan legislation guarantees human rights for all the citizens, but enforcement of law is still a problem, especially in Transnistria. Finally, despite a reluctant implementation of Council of Europe agreement, the Bessarabian Metropolitan Church was added to the official registry of religious denominations. To sum up, Moldova has made an impressive progress in adoption of democratic standards of legislation and rule of law. Implementation of some part of legislation still raises concern, though. The achievements of the decade of transition to democracy are mainly hampered by inefficient administration, lack of adequate financing of public bodies, poverty, territorial separatism and corruption of state officials. However, it should be underlined that in spite of serious political and constitutional crises, the political system of the country works and is kept largely on democratic track.\textsuperscript{117}
