

Destined to Divide? Preliminary Analysis of Simultaneous (June 2010) Public Opinion Surveys in Moldova and Transdnistria

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Presentation at the Institute of European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, George Washington University, Washington DC, September 28, 2010

Acknowledgements: This research project is funded by National Science Foundation grant no. 0827016. We thank our research colleague, Professor Vladimir Kolossov, and also Andrei Gertsen of the Russian Academy of Sciences for arranging the fieldwork in both regions. We also thank Ion Jigau and his staff at CBS-AXA in Chisinau and Dr. Elena Bobkova, Transdnistrian State University, Tiraspol for managing the complex survey in their respective regions. We also acknowledge the hundreds of state officials, students and professors, and members of social-political organizations who met with us about this project in Tiraspol, Chisinau, Tskhinval(i) and Sukhum(i). We appreciate the help of survey respondents in ongoing surveys in Transdnistria, Moldova, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Georgia and Kosovo.

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This is a preliminary look at the recently collected data – it presents a lot of comparisons both across the border and within the two societies. It raises as many questions as it answers. Comments welcome to help us interpret the data.

Aims of the Unrecognized “de facto” States Project :

1. What geopolitical conditions produce partly-recognized - states?
2. How do partly and unrecognized ‘de facto’ states endure?
3. How successful are the ‘de facto’ states in state-making and negotiating complex national relations?
4. What is the impact of the Kosovo precedent on the legitimacy of the Russian-backed Eurasian “de facto” -states?

Survey Data:

- Surveys: Representative samples (500 in South Ossetia, 1000 in Moldova, TMR, Abkhazia, Kosovo and 1500 in Georgia) with approx. 130 questions in each (more than 75% questions standardized across 6 samples)

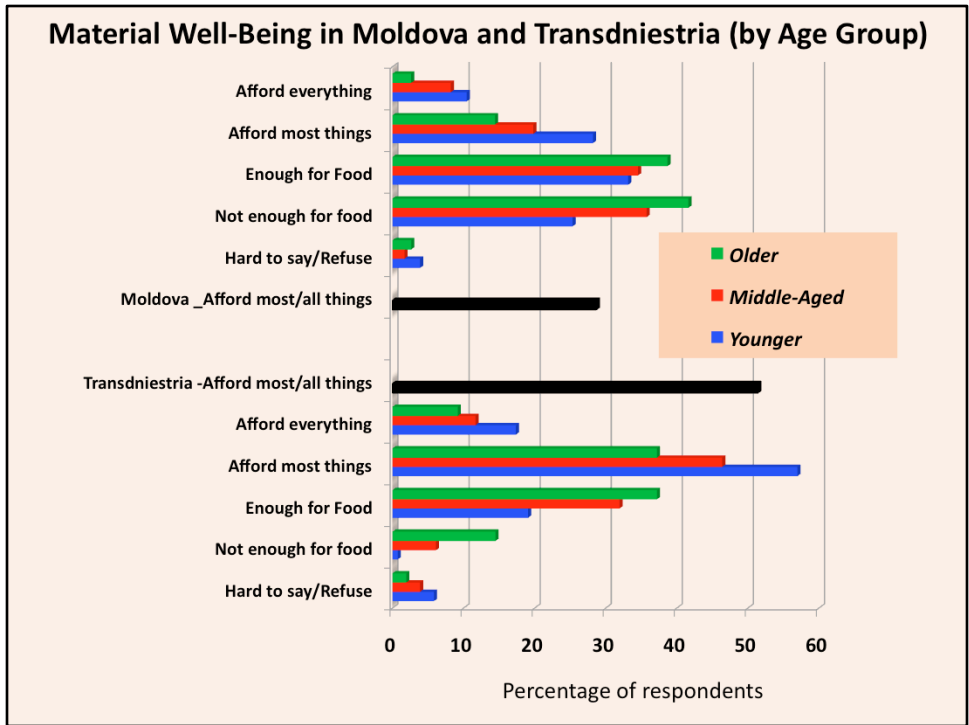
- **Categories of Questions:**

Socio-demographic/wellbeing	Identities
Internal legitimacy/state-building	Mobility and Connectedness
Group relations and inter-group attitudes	Geopolitical knowledge
External relations	Place and culture meanings

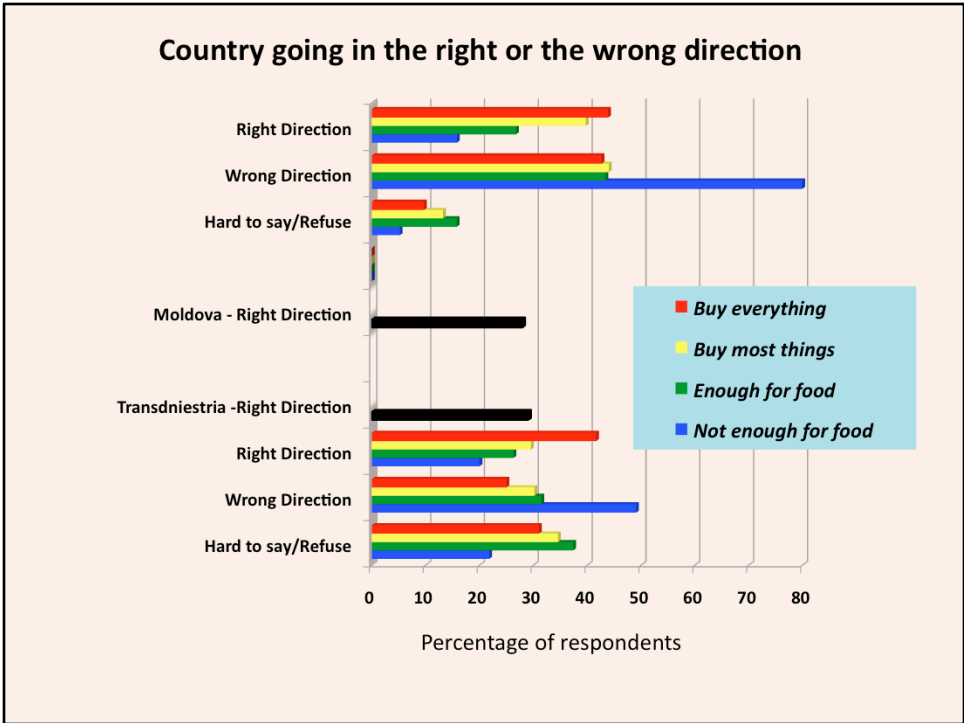
Public Opinion Surveys in Moldova and Transdniestria, late June 2010

	Moldova	Transdniestria
Sample size	1102	975
Sample localities (urban and rural)	33	12
Response rate	65.3	84
Ethnic distribution (% of sample)		
Moldovans	79.2	21.4
Ukrainians	6.9	33.3
Russians	5.9	36.9
Gagauz	2.3	1.9
Bulgarian	1.7	2.2
Others/mixed	4	4.3
% "Interested and honest" (interviewer rating)	90.8	89.1
Margin of error	3%	4.5%
Examined by key socio-demographic predictors		
gender	age	material well-being
		nationality

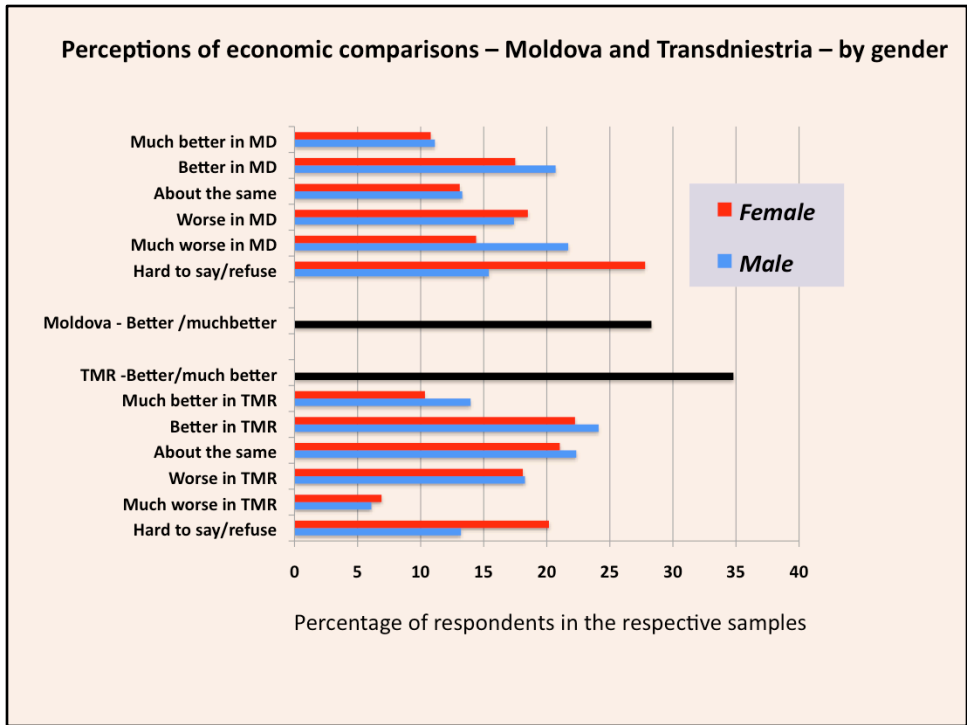
Note that material well-being and age are strongly correlated – younger people (18-35) generally report higher rates of being able to afford consumer goods etc. Pensioners have a much higher rate of saying that they cannot even afford food. Age categories are 18-35, 35-54, over 55.



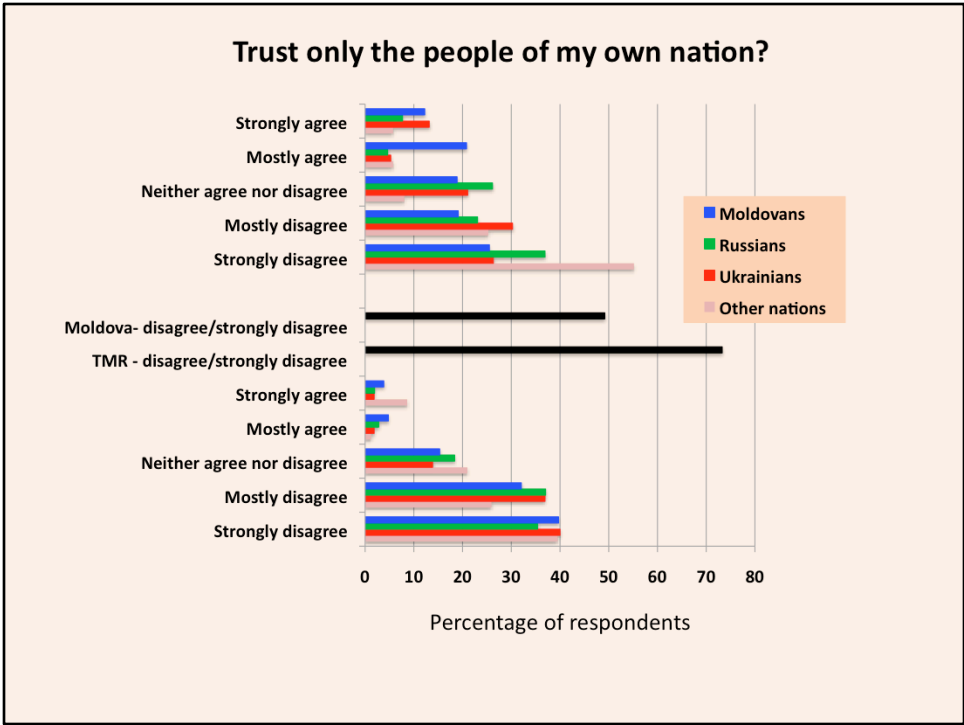
Nationality is also significant in both samples as well – and so is gender in the TMR (much more wealthy). About twice the ratio in TMR say that they can afford most or all things. Same trend is evident in both places – as age increases, ability to afford stuff decreases.



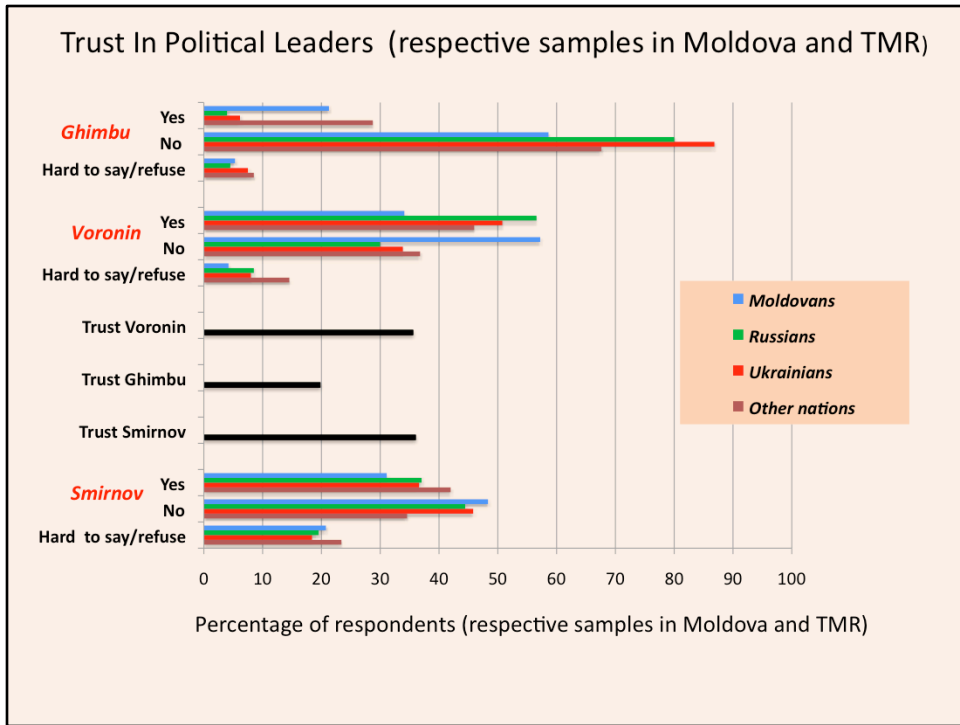
The ratios of overall satisfaction are remarkably similar at about 28%, which of course is low. Satisfaction is highly correlated with material well-being, richer people more satisfied in both locations but the relationship is most pronounced for Moldova with the poor showing almost 80% belief in the “country going in the wrong direction”. The gap between rich and poor in TMR is not as pronounced with a minority of all material well-being categories thinking that the country is heading in the wrong direction.



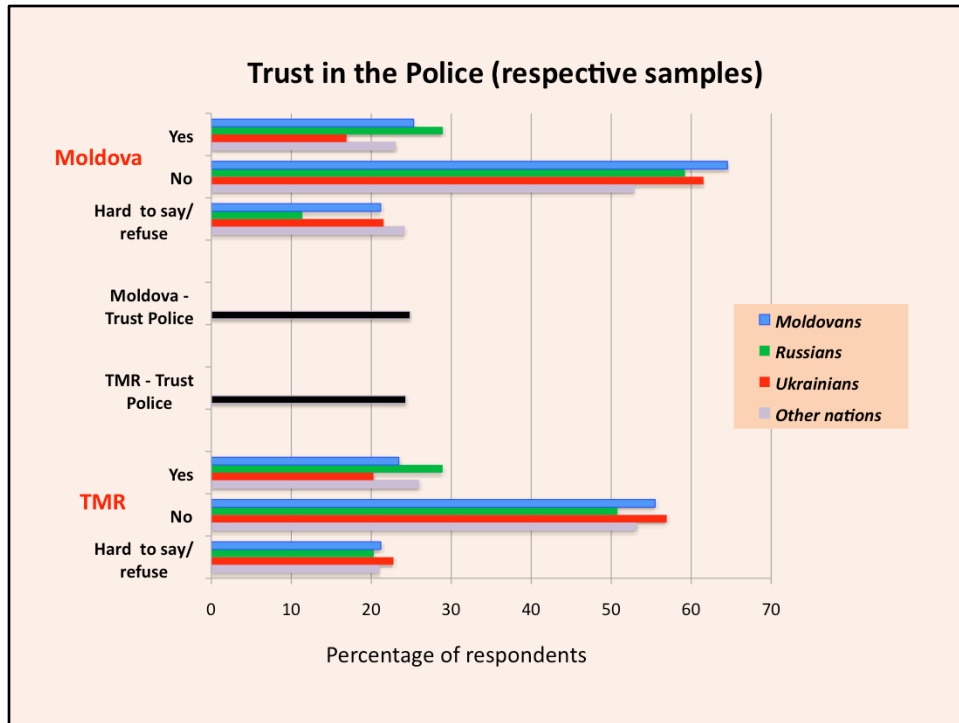
Each sample was asked to compare the economic situation across the de facto border compared to their home territory, Unlike Abkhazia, where few travel across the border to Georgia, except for Gali residents, there is a lot of cross-border traffic from TMR to Moldova, though not vice-versa (see other question on how often they cross the border). Not surprisingly, the “Hard to say” ratio is high especially for the Moldova sample (about 25%) because of the lack of travel. Generally, the Transdniestrians believed the economic situation was better in their territory than the Moldovans believed in theirs. This was the question where gender is the most important factor – maybe women are more aware of economic (shopping?) realities than men. About 40% of the women in Moldova believed the situation to be better across the border than in their home country.



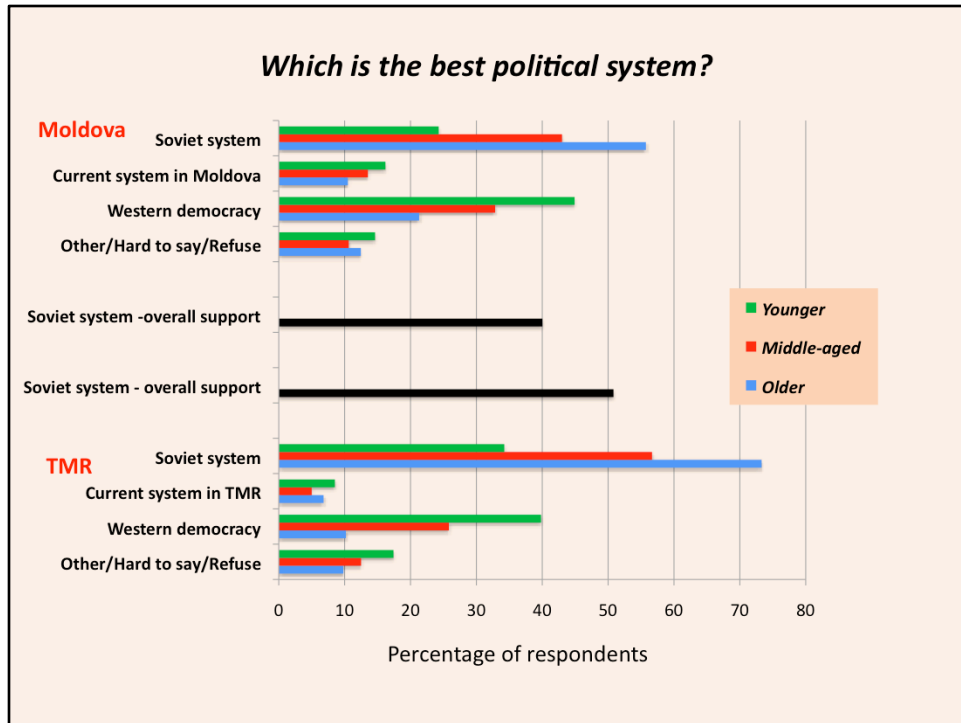
In war zones, this intra-group trust tends to be higher – and across group trust tends to be low. Disagreement with this proposition suggests a non-ethnic positioning on the trust factor. About half of people in Moldova and about 75% in TMR trust members of other groups. Is it because of a sense of “political correctness” in TMR as a result of the official state policy of “equality of ethnicities” that it occurs or is it a genuine belief? Hard to say at this stage, but we will check it out later. Moldovans are likely to agree with the proposition slightly more than the other groups but the differences are fairly small,



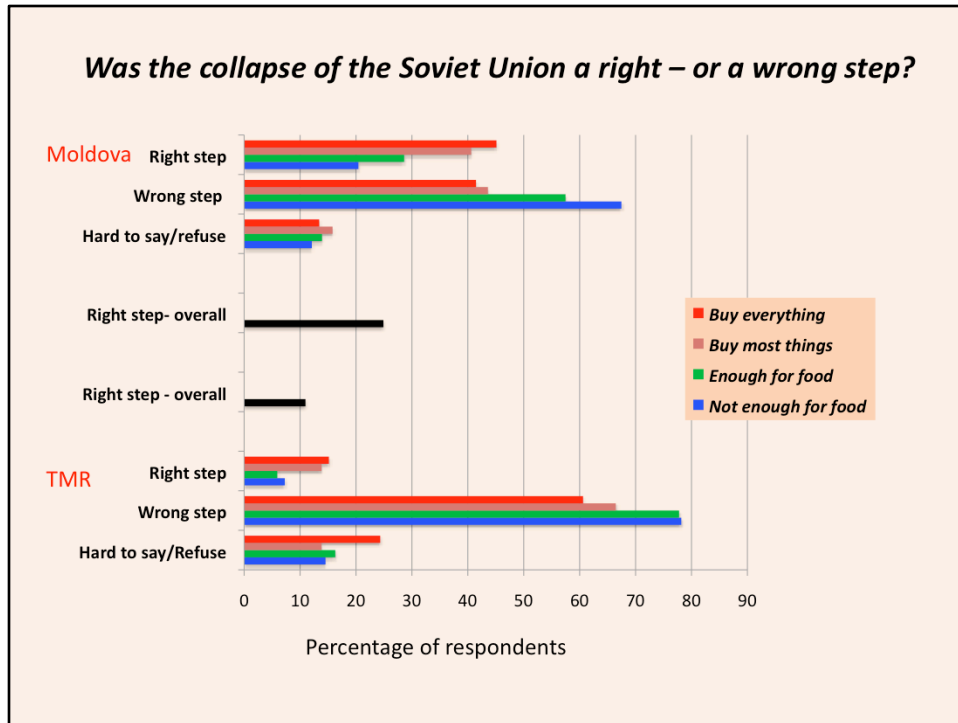
We put both Ghimpu (current) and Voronin (recent) presidents into the graph for the Moldova sample. Of the 3, Smirnov scores highest in the trust stakes but he scores only 25% - much lower levels for Ghimpu (20%) and Voronin (35%) is about the same. Ethnic Moldovans trust Ghimpu more than Ukrainians and Russians do, Russians and Ukrainians trust Voronin (head of Communist party – proRussian) than Moldovans. Ethnic differences in the trust of Smirnov are much smaller, Moldovans lower than the other groups. Notice the “hard to say/refuse” ratio at about 20% is quite high for TMR – sensitive question>???



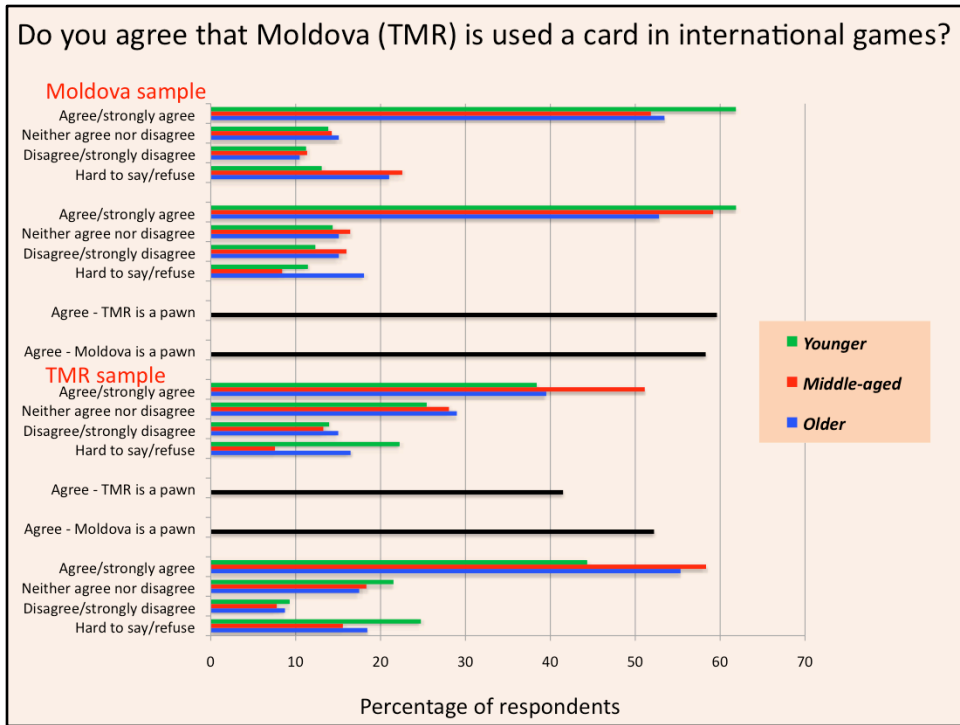
Trust in police is a good indicator of the perception of state functioning, In the N Caucasus, and in Russia, the trust level is only about 20%. These ratios (overall) then are very close to the Russian figures where we have previously surveyed. The biggest differences are evident across the nationality categories – but they are not large. Russians slightly trust the police more than the other groups but it’s still less than 30%. About 60% of Moldovans don’t trust the police and about 50% of Transdnistrians don’t trust the police – not a good sign for the functioning of the respective societies.



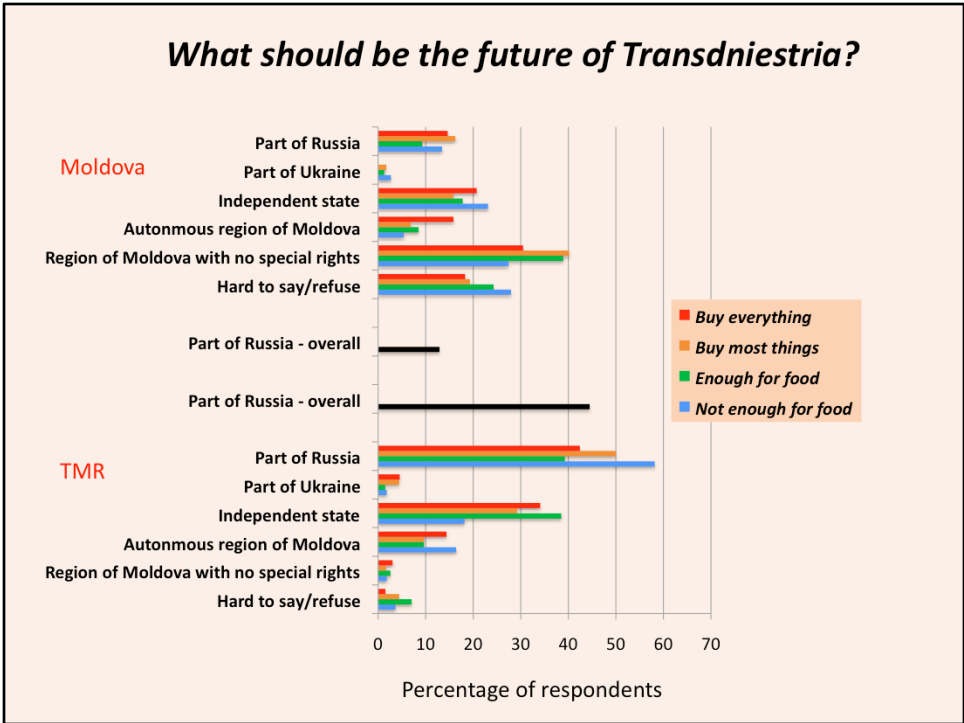
The results are generally similar to Abkhazia, with poorer people preferring the Soviet system and richer people the Western democratic model. (The graph shows the age comparisons but age and material well-being are strongly related). (In Abkhazia though, the “present system” got a plurality of support”). The comparison overall of TMR and Moldova for the Soviet system does not show a huge gap (50% versus 40%) ; in both places, the Soviet system was the first choice. The “hard to say/refuse” category was pretty high for this questions (over 12% in both places), maybe because the respondents did not know what the “Western democracy” model would look like. In Russia, for comparison, about 30% of the population still prefer the Soviet model. In both places, the younger cohort show a plurality of preferences for the Western democracy model.



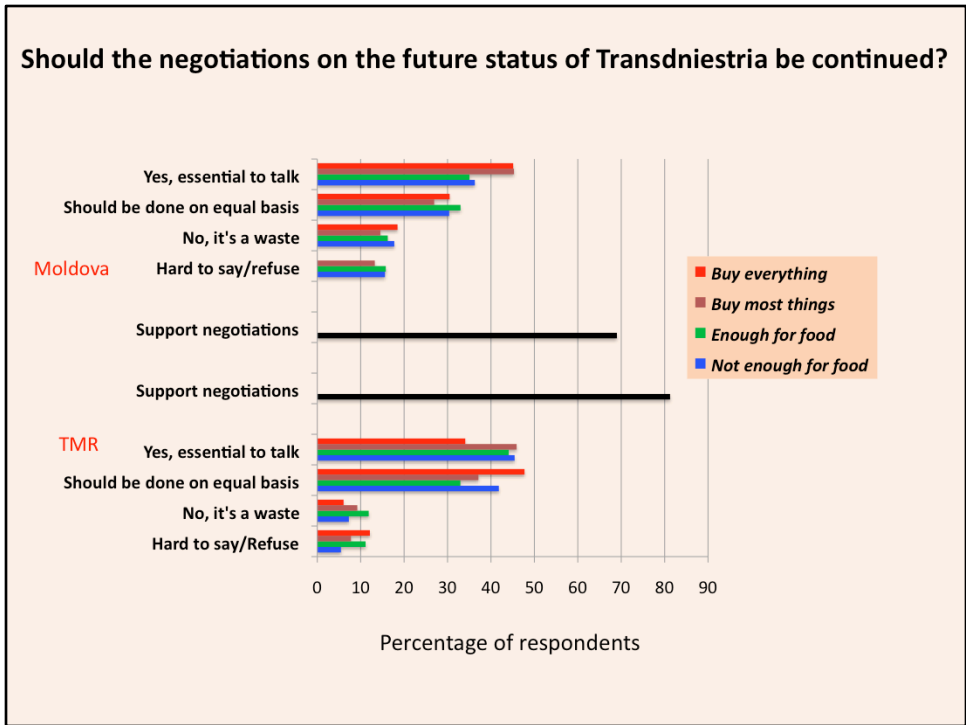
Compared to the 25% of Moldova respondents, less than half the TMR respondents believe that the collapse of the USSR was a “good thing” In both zones, twice as many people consider it a “wrong step” as a right step. Again, the views are related to income – poorer groups believe it to be a wrong step (near 80% in TMR and about 60% in Moldova) but in Moldova, with the exception of the richest, all sub-groups show more support for the “wrong step” choice. Even 20 years after the collapse of the SU, the legacy of the state as the provider lives on strongly even in “European-aspirant Moldova”.



A complicated graph – both samples are asked separately in 2 questions if the TMR and if Moldova are “pawns” (cards in the international games). More than half of the Moldovan sample agree that both MD and TMR are pawns – generally younger people more likely to agree with this proposition. TMR residents less likely to agree with the propositions for TMR but agree strongly that it is the case for Moldova - “our state is not a pawn but MD is”. Younger people in TMR less likely to think in these terms than their elder co-citizens but in MD, it’s the reverse – younger people are less optimistic and more likely to think of their state and its de facto state neighbor as pawns.



We asked about both the future of TMR and future of Moldova – only future of MD reported here, and it was asked on both sides of the border. Opinions are split all over the place among the Moldovan sample (except for the Ukrainian option, supported by few as was also the case in the TMR). The “hard to say” ratio at 20% in MD was over quadruple that of TMR – as one would expect. The Russian option is selected by nearly half of Transdniestrians, and another third select the independence option. Only about 15% want any part of MD. Material well-being provides a good predictor, though the differences across groups are not terribly consistent. Interestingly, about half of the Moldovan sample chooses the Moldovan option for the TMR, suggesting a high level of willingness to accept its re-integration.



More than two-thirds of both samples support the continuance of negotiations on the future of the TMR (which are not going anywhere). The differences between the income categories are not large – and the similarities across the border in the support ratios are striking.

Conclusions

SIMILARITIES:

1. A generational gap is present in both places – “Soviet” citizens versus young in both places.
– “Soviet regret” are evident - Smirnov and Voronin get about 35% trust: young disproportionately want western democracy.
2. State institutions/trust are very weak in both places. – few prefer current system; belief in corruption is high and trust of institutions (e.g. police) and leaders is weak
3. Poverty is high in both places especially for older people but wealth higher in TMR.
4. Both samples see their country and the neighboring country as pawns in international games.
5. Both populations want negotiations on TMR’s eventual status to continue.

DIFFERENCES:

1. Aspirations are different. For TMR, almost all want unification with Russia or independence
– The Moldovan sample want reunification with the TMR.
2. The TMR peoples support the “civic state” argument/rhetoric; this civic identity is not as strong in Moldova.