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# Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy

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## Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy

The Republic of Moldova is located in southeastern Europe near the Black Sea, between Romania and Ukraine. The current government of Moldova—like that of neighboring Ukraine—seeks greater integration with the West as it faces Russian political interference and territorial occupation. Moldova became an official candidate for European Union (EU) membership in 2022. In November 2024, Moldova’s incumbent president, Maia Sandu, was reelected on a pro-European platform despite allegedly substantial Russian election interference. Parliamentary elections, which could reinforce or weaken Moldova’s pro-European orientation, are scheduled for September 28, 2025. The outcome of the election also could have implications for U.S. strategic concerns in the Black Sea region.

Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the United States and the EU expanded support for Moldova’s efforts to implement domestic reforms, curtail Russian influence, bolster energy security, and alleviate the humanitarian and economic effects of the Russia-Ukraine war. Moldova’s leaders have consistently expressed support for Ukraine and warned that a Russian victory in Ukraine could expose Moldova to heightened Russian aggression. One particular vulnerability is Moldova’s unresolved territorial conflict: since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Moldova has contended with the Russia-backed de facto secession of the Transnistria region, an area bordering Ukraine that hosts a Russian military contingent.

The United States and Moldova generally have had good relations since Moldova’s independence. Some Members of Congress have expressed interest in the two countries’ relationship, as well as in Moldova’s stability, security, and strategic role in the Black Sea region. In the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, some Members of Congress may seek to shape and conduct oversight of U.S. policy toward Moldova and to monitor regional developments that could have implications for U.S. national interests. Areas of focus may include

- alleged Russian efforts to interfere in Moldova’s upcoming parliamentary election;
- Moldova’s efforts to counter Russian hybrid threats and reduce reliance on Russian energy supplies;
- Moldova’s efforts to bolster its armed forces;
- the status of U.S. assistance for Moldova’s economic development, defense, and energy security;
- the status of U.S. sanctions targeting alleged corruption and Russia-linked democratic subversion; and
- Moldova’s bid for EU membership and relations with NATO.

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## Overview

The Republic of Moldova (hereinafter Moldova) is a country in southeastern Europe located near the Black Sea, between Romania and Ukraine (see **Figure 1**). The current government of Moldova—like that of neighboring Ukraine—seeks greater integration with the West as it faces Russian political interference and territorial occupation. Moldova became a candidate for European Union (EU) membership in 2022. Moldova does not currently seek membership in NATO, as Moldova’s constitution enshrines military neutrality.

In November 2024, Moldovan President Maia Sandu was reelected on a pro-European platform despite allegedly substantial Russian election interference. Parliamentary elections, which could reinforce or weaken Moldova’s pro-European orientation, are scheduled for September 28, 2025. The outcome of the election also could have implications for U.S. strategic concerns in the Black Sea region.

Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Moldova’s leaders have consistently expressed support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and warned that a Russian victory in the war against Ukraine could expose Moldova to heightened Russian aggression.<sup>1</sup> One particular vulnerability for Moldova is its unresolved territorial conflict: since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Moldova has contended with the Russia-backed de facto secession of the Transnistria region, a multiethnic, predominantly Russian-speaking area bordering Ukraine that hosts a Russian military contingent and is internationally recognized as part of Moldova.

The United States and Moldova generally have had good relations since Moldova’s independence. Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the United States and the EU expanded support for Moldova’s efforts to implement domestic reforms, curtail Russian influence, bolster energy security, and alleviate the humanitarian and economic effects of Russia’s war against Ukraine. As part of these efforts, the Biden Administration increased foreign assistance to Moldova, announcing up to \$1 billion in aid between February 2022 and September 2024.<sup>2</sup> The second Trump Administration’s review and termination of many U.S. foreign aid awards in 2025 has impacted U.S. assistance to Moldova, although comprehensive data are not yet publicly available (see “U.S.-Moldova Relations”).

Some Members of Congress have expressed support for the United States’ relationship with Moldova and for strengthening Moldova’s stability and security in the Black Sea region, including by bolstering Moldova’s defenses against Russian hybrid threats. In the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House agreed to H.Res. 833 and the Senate agreed to S.Res. 638, expressing support for the strengthening of U.S.-Moldova relations. During the 118<sup>th</sup> and 119<sup>th</sup> Congresses, some Members have engaged in the bilateral U.S.-Moldova relationship through congressional delegations, participation in the U.S. Congressional Moldova Caucus, assessment and oversight of related U.S. policy, and the introduction of related legislation (see “Issues for Congress”).

Related topics that may be of interest to Members of the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress include Moldova’s resilience against Russian hybrid threats, the status of U.S. assistance and sanctions related to Russian malign activities, and Moldova’s defense capacity and EU membership bid.

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<sup>1</sup> Maia Sandu, “Ukraine’s Fight Protects My Country’s Freedom,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 28, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Embassy in Moldova, “United States Announces Substantial Additional Assistance for Moldova,” September 17, 2024.

## Historical and Social Background

Moldova has had historical associations with both Romania and Russia (for a map of Moldova, see **Figure 1**).<sup>3</sup> Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of Moldova’s present territory was part of a larger Romanian-speaking Principality of Moldova (or Moldavia), which itself was subordinate to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey’s predecessor, beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1812, contemporary Moldova’s territory was incorporated into the Russian Empire, forming much of what became known as the province of Bessarabia. In 1918, after the collapse of the Russian Empire, Bessarabia became part of the independent Kingdom of Romania.

In 1940, Bessarabia was annexed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, or Soviet Union), the Russian Empire’s successor, where much of it formed the Moldovan (or Moldavian) Soviet Socialist Republic. Soviet Moldova also included territory along the eastern shore (Left Bank) of the Dniester River (alt. Dniester; in Romanian, Nistru). In the early 1990s, this territory formed the basis of Moldova’s breakaway Transnistria region, which is internationally recognized as part of Moldova (see “Transnistria and Gagauzia Regions”).<sup>4</sup> Moldova gained independence with the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Since 1991, out-migration and declining birth rates have contributed to a decline in Moldova’s population.<sup>5</sup> According to the 1989 Soviet census, Moldova (including Transnistria) had a population of about 4.3 million, of which about 65% identified as ethnic Moldovans; the next-largest ethnic groups were Ukrainians (14%) and Russians (13%). Between 2004 and 2024, the population of Moldova, excluding Transnistria-controlled areas, declined by about 29%, from 3.4 million to 2.4 million.<sup>6</sup> One million or more Moldovans are estimated to live outside Moldova (primarily elsewhere in Europe); many have sought to work and receive an education abroad.<sup>7</sup> In 2024, about 85% of Moldova’s population (excluding Transnistria) identified as Moldovan or Romanian (on Transnistria’s population, see “Transnistria and Gagauzia Regions”).<sup>8</sup>

Many Moldovans share linguistic and cultural ties with Romanians. Since 2023, Moldova’s constitution has declared Romanian (rather than the essentially identical Moldovan) the country’s “state language” (many Moldovans also speak Russian).<sup>9</sup> In an October 2024 opinion poll, about 36% of respondents stated they would support Moldova’s unification with Romania; 50% said they were against it.<sup>10</sup> Romania, an EU member, provides a pathway to citizenship for

<sup>3</sup> Historical surveys of Moldova include Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Hoover Institution Press, 1999), and Rebecca Haynes, *Moldova: A History* (I.B. Tauris, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> From 1924 to 1940, this Left Bank territory was part of a “Moldavian autonomous republic” of Soviet Ukraine, which Soviet authorities established to promote irredentist aims in Bessarabia. From 1941 to 1944, during World War II, Romania temporarily retook Bessarabia; it also occupied this Left Bank territory and adjacent territory in Soviet Ukraine, administering these areas collectively as the Transnistria Governorate. The southern portion of Bessarabia, adjacent to the Black Sea and the Danube River, became part of Ukraine during Soviet rule. King, *The Moldovans*, pp. 51-62, 91-95; and Haynes, *Moldova*, pp. 133-138.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Judah, “Moldova Faces ‘Existential’ Population Crisis,” *Balkan Insight*, January 16, 2020; and Kamil Calus, “A Disappearing Country: Moldova on the Verge of a Demographic Catastrophe,” Center for Eastern Studies (OSW), January 8, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova (NBS), “Final Results of the Population and Housing Census 2024,” updated July 16, 2025, and 2004 population census.

<sup>7</sup> Infotag News Agency, “President Sandu Names Outflow of Population as One of Moldova’s Main Problems,” August 29, 2023; and Calus, “A Disappearing Country.”

<sup>8</sup> NBS, “Preliminary Results of the 2024 Population and Housing Census,” January 30, 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Article 13 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. Also see Yana Fremer, “Moldova: New Law Establishes Romanian as the State Language of the Country,” Law Library of Congress, April 23, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Institute of Public Policies, *Public Opinion Barometer*, October 2024, <http://bop.ipp.md/en>.

descendants of former citizens of Romania, including those who lost their citizenship when the Soviet Union annexed Moldova in the 1940s.<sup>11</sup> In 2021, Romanian authorities stated that more than 640,000 Moldovans had received Romanian citizenship.<sup>12</sup> Moldovans with Romanian citizenship may live and work throughout the EU.

**Figure 1. Republic of Moldova**



**Source:** Figure created by CRS using data from the Department of State and ESRI.

**Note:** The government of Moldova officially classifies the municipalities and settlements of the breakaway Transnistria region as Administrative-Territorial Units on the Left Bank of the Dniester (*unitățile administrativ-teritoriale din stânga Nistrului*). These administrative units' boundaries do not correspond precisely to the area under Transnistrian control, which includes the Bender municipality and some other areas. The Left Bank refers to the eastern side of the Dniester River.

Moldova's main religion is Orthodox Christianity. Most Orthodox Christians in Moldova are adherents of the Orthodox Church of Moldova (officially the Metropolis of Chișinău and All Moldova). The Orthodox Church of Moldova formally is subordinate to the Russian Orthodox Church (the Moscow Patriarchate). Russia's war against Ukraine reportedly has put some pressure on Moldovan church leaders to distance the Orthodox Church of Moldova from the

<sup>11</sup> Refworld Global Law and Policy Database, "Romania: No. 21/1991 on Romanian Citizenship."

<sup>12</sup> Madalin Necsutu, "Quarter of Moldovans Now Have Romanian Passports," *Balkan Insight*, May 27, 2021.

Moscow Patriarchate.<sup>13</sup> A minority of Orthodox Christians in Moldova are adherents of the Metropolis of Bessarabia, a subordinate branch of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

## Transnistria and Gagauzia Regions

Moldova's 1991 independence was accompanied by a brief armed conflict with the self-declared, Russia-backed Transnistria region (in Russian, *Pridnestrovie* or "along-the-Dnister"). Joined to Soviet Moldova during World War II, the area that became the Transnistria region was Soviet Moldova's industrial center and home to about 15% of the republic's population by 1989. At that time, about 54% of the population identified as ethnic Ukrainians or Russians (28% Ukrainian, 26% Russian), and about 40% identified as ethnic Moldovans.<sup>14</sup>

In 1990, as a nationalist independence movement gained momentum in Moldova, local pro-Soviet authorities in the Transnistria region proclaimed the establishment of a "Dniester (*Pridnestrovskaya*) Moldavian" republic separate from Moldova. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the region fought to secede from Moldova. The former Soviet 14<sup>th</sup> Guards Army, which was based in Transnistria and came under Russian control, played a key role in securing the region's de facto secession. Successor forces to the 14<sup>th</sup> Army, officially known as the Operational Group of Russian Forces in the Transnistria Region of Moldova, have helped sustain the region's de facto secession to the present (also see "Transnistria Region: Conflict Resolution Efforts").<sup>15</sup> In July 2025, the Moldovan government reported that the population of Transnistria-controlled areas was about 375,000 (down from about 555,000 in 2004, according to Transnistria authorities).<sup>16</sup>

In 1995, Moldova resolved a second regional dispute by establishing an "autonomous territorial unit" of Gagauzia. The Gagauz are a predominantly Christian Turkic minority, which initially sought to remain in the Soviet Union and declared regional sovereignty, like Transnistria, in 1989 (and again in 1990) before reaching an agreement with Moldova on self-governance in 1995. Located in southern Moldova, Gagauzia includes one main region and three smaller noncontiguous territories. In the 2024 census, Gagauzia's population was reported to be about 103,000, of which 82% identified as ethnic Gagauz. About half the region's population reported Russian to be their primary language, and most rejected Moldova's EU aspirations in a 2024 referendum.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> David Smith, "Schism in the Moldovan Orthodox Church?," *Moldova Matters*, November 23, 2023; and Paul Goble, "Moscow Fears Moldova Will Follow Ukraine and Ban Russian Orthodox Church," *Jamestown Foundation*, September 26, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> These data do not correspond precisely to the demography of the area that subsequently came under Transnistrian control. In 1989, the administrative districts that formed the basis for the Transnistria region had a population of about 600,000, but some parts of these districts stayed under Moldovan control and other parts, most notably the city of Bender, came under Transnistrian control. One 2022 study calculated that, in 1989, the area that subsequently came under Transnistrian control had a population of about 706,000. King, *The Moldovans*, pp. 183-185; and Andrei Crivenco and Sabine von Löwis, "Shrinking Transnistria. Trends and Effects of Demographic Decline in a De Facto State," *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 70, no. 1 (2022), pp. 47-79.

<sup>15</sup> King, *The Moldovans*, pp. 191-196; and Edward Ozhiganov, "The Republic of Moldova: Transdniester and the 14<sup>th</sup> Army" and Brian D. Taylor, "Commentary on Moldova," both in Alexei Arbatov et al., eds., *Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union: Russian and American Perspectives* (MIT Press, 1997), pp. 164-183, 211-218.

<sup>16</sup> Crivenco and von Löwis, "Shrinking Transnistria" (footnote 14); and Government of the Republic of Moldova, "347,161 Residents of the Transnistrian Region Hold Citizenship of the Republic of Moldova," July 16, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> NBS; Galiya Ibragimova, "Will Gagauzia Become Moldova's Second Breakaway Region?," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (hereinafter *Carnegie Endowment*), May 22, 2024; and Violeta Colesnic, "Moldova's Gagauzia Region Remains Largely Pro-Russia," *DW*, November 1, 2024.

## Political Developments

Over the course of more than three decades, observers generally have considered Moldova a fragile democracy with a polarized society that includes pro-European and Russian-leaning electorates.<sup>18</sup> In a 2023 opinion poll, about 47% of respondents supported pursuing EU membership, whereas 33% of respondents preferred that Moldova accede to the Eurasian Economic Union, a Russia-led organization.<sup>19</sup> Moldova's EU membership bid and relationship with Russia have been key issues in recent elections.

Moldova has a mixed presidential-parliamentary system. Since 2016, Moldova's president has been elected by direct vote (previously, since 2001, the president was elected by parliament). The president is the head of state and supreme commander of Moldova's armed forces. Moldova's president shares executive power with a prime minister, who serves as head of government. The president's responsibilities include nominating the prime minister (whose government is subject to parliamentary confirmation) and appointing judges nominated by a judicial council. The president can initiate legislation and may dissolve parliament under limited conditions.<sup>20</sup>

Maia Sandu, a former World Bank specialist, minister of education, and prime minister, won Moldova's presidency in 2020 on a pro-European reformist platform (she received 58% of the second-round vote). Sandu defeated the incumbent, Igor Dodon of the Russia-leaning, socially conservative Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM), which at the time led a coalition government.<sup>21</sup>

President Sandu was reelected to a second term in Moldova's two-round presidential election on October 20 and November 3, 2024. Moldova also held a referendum on October 20, 2024, on whether to amend the constitution to declare EU membership a "strategic goal" of Moldova and establish a legal framework for Moldova's accession to the EU.<sup>22</sup> In the first round, President Sandu led with 42% of the vote.<sup>23</sup> In the runoff, Sandu defeated Alexandr Stoianoglo, 55% to 45%. Stoianoglo, a former prosecutor-general who was suspended from office in 2021, was

<sup>18</sup> The U.S.-based organization Freedom House considers Moldova to be "partly free." Freedom House ranks all countries in the world by a "global freedom" score, which includes measures of political rights and civil liberties (a score of 100 is considered most free). Moldova's "freedom score" in 2025 is 60 out of 100. Scores reflect the state of affairs at the start of the year. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2025*.

<sup>19</sup> In an October 2024 poll that presented the questions as a nonbinary choice, about 55% of respondents supported European Union (EU) membership and 41% of respondents supported membership in the Eurasian Economic Union. Institute of Public Policies, *Public Opinion Barometer*, August 2023 and October 2024, <http://bop.ipp.md/en>.

<sup>20</sup> Presidency of the Republic of Moldova, "The Status and Powers of the President of the Republic of Moldova," <https://presedinte.md/eng/statutul-si-atributiile>.

<sup>21</sup> Maia Sandu served in 2019 as prime minister in a short-lived coalition government with the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM), which placed first in the 2019 parliamentary election. The coalition formed to unseat the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), which tried unsuccessfully to use Moldova's Constitutional Court to stay in power; after five months, the PDM joined the PSRM to unseat Sandu. CRS Insight IN11137, *Moldova's Political Crisis Abates*, by Cory Welt; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), "Moldovan Government Collapses; EU Calls Development 'Worrying,'" November 12, 2019; and Andrew E. Kramer, "Pro-E.U. Candidate Wins Moldova Election over Putin-Backed Rival," *New York Times*, November 16, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> The text of the referendum question is available at Central Election Commission of the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter CEC), <https://a.cec.md/ro/modelul-buletinelor-de-vot-17022.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Diaspora voters played a significant role in Sandu's reelection and passage of the referendum on EU accession. In the second round of the election, Sandu received 83% support among voters outside Moldova, who made up about 20% of second-round turnout. Transnistria residents are formally permitted to vote in national elections. About 26,000 voted in the second round of the 2024 presidential election. Results available at CEC, <https://pvt2024.cec.md/cec-presidential-results-tour2.html>.

backed by the PSRM.<sup>24</sup> The referendum on EU membership passed 50.4% to 49.6%. Russia allegedly sought to interfere in both rounds of the election (see “Russian Influence in Moldova”).

Moldova’s most recent parliamentary election was in July 2021.<sup>25</sup> Sandu’s center-right, social-liberal, and pro-EU Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) won the election with 53% of the vote, securing 63 of 101 seats in Moldova’s unicameral parliament.<sup>26</sup> A PSRM-led bloc placed second with 27% of votes (32 seats). PAS’s victory marked the first time in 20 years that a party in Moldova received an absolute majority of votes in a parliamentary election. Prime Minister Dorin Recean of PAS has led Moldova’s government since February 2023.

Moldova is scheduled to hold its next parliamentary election on September 28, 2025. With PAS’s absolute majority at stake, the election could have implications for the pacing of Moldova’s EU accession bid and its foreign policy orientation. In January 2025, Stoianoglo announced a multiparty electoral coalition, the Alternative Bloc; two other coalition leaders are the mayor of Chișinău (Moldova’s capital), Ion Ceban, and former prime minister Ion Chicu (2019-2020).<sup>27</sup> The Alternative Bloc has said it supports EU integration alongside preservation of Moldova’s neutrality.<sup>28</sup> In July 2025, Dodon’s PSRM and three other parties regarded as Russia-leaning announced plans to form an election coalition. Dodon said the PSRM-led bloc supported preserving Moldova’s neutrality and sovereignty and “re-establishing strategic ties with Russia.”<sup>29</sup>

In a poll released in July 2025, PAS received the most support (27.4%), followed by PSRM (10.4%), Alternative (6.6%), and the pro-Russia Victory bloc (6.2% but now ineligible; see “Reform Agenda and Challenges”).<sup>30</sup> Public opinion polls indicate that economic conditions are a key issue for many Moldovans.<sup>31</sup>

## Reform Agenda and Challenges

Upon coming to power in 2021, the PAS government pledged to strengthen the rule of law and address long-standing concerns about corruption and state capture. The government’s reform agenda incorporated nine priorities that the EU outlined in 2022 as criteria for Moldova’s advancement in the EU accession process. These priorities included delivering anti-corruption results; completing key reforms to Moldova’s judicial and prosecutorial institutions; and developing a “de-oligarchization” plan to dismantle the “excessive influence of vested interests in

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Stoianoglo was suspended from office in 2021 after he was arrested and charged with abuse of office and related offenses. He was formally dismissed in 2023. For background on the allegations and his legal appeals, see Vladimir Solovyov, “Political Newbie Stoianoglo Adds Intrigue to Moldovan Elections,” Carnegie Endowment, July 18, 2024; and Madalin Neesutu, “Moldova’s Former Top Prosecutor Brings Legal Baggage to Presidential Race,” *Balkan Insight*, October 25, 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Sandu dissolved parliament in 2021 after it was unable to form a stable government. Iulian Ernst, “Moldovan President Dissolves Parliament, Calls Snap Election,” *bne IntelliNews*, April 29, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Sandu, a founder of the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) in 2016, stepped down as party leader after her election to the presidency in 2020. The current PAS leader is Speaker of Parliament Igor Grosu.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Tanas, “Moldovan Opposition Leader Forms Coalition to Challenge Sandu at Parliament Election,” Reuters, February 1, 2025.

<sup>28</sup> Blocul Politic Alternativa, “Blocul Alternativa a prezentat patru piloni fundamentali pentru consolidarea Republicii Moldova,” August 5, 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Reuters, “Moldova’s Pro-Russian Parties Unite to Press for September Election Win,” July 22, 2025.

<sup>30</sup> The opinion poll did not include potential voters located abroad. Infotag, “Three Parties and Two Blocs May Enter New Parliament,” July 15, 2025.

<sup>31</sup> IRI, “National Poll of Moldova, May 2025,” June 11, 2025; and Institute of Public Policies, *Public Opinion Barometer*, October 2024, <http://bop.ipp.md/en>.

economic, political, and public life.”<sup>32</sup> In June 2024, the EU cited sufficient progress on these criteria in its decision to formally launch accession negotiations with Moldova (see “EU Membership Bid”).

Alongside its reform agenda, the PAS government has contended with the impacts of Russia’s war against Ukraine and alleged Russian interference in Moldovan affairs. Since 2022, Moldova has faced higher inflation and energy costs, and it has provided support to tens of thousands of refugees from Ukraine (and was hosting more than 133,000 as of June 30, 2025).<sup>33</sup> In an October 2024 report, the European Commission (the EU’s executive) found that Moldova had faced “unprecedented challenges resulting from Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and intensified hybrid actions from Russia and its proxies seeking to destabilize the country” (for more, see “Russian Influence in Moldova”).<sup>34</sup> The report assessed that Moldovan authorities “showed a continued commitment to implement reforms, despite hybrid attacks from Russia and its proxies” but also sometimes have “struggled to strike a balanced approach between measures to counter malign interference and the respect of rule of law and fundamental rights, in line with international standards.” Some other organizations have made similar assessments.<sup>35</sup>

PAS’s victory in the 2021 election, and the formation of a single-party government, ended more than a decade of rule by fragile coalitions that included allegedly corrupt political forces. Some observers contend that wealthy businessmen associated with the formerly ruling Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) and the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM) previously “captured” some Moldovan state institutions for personal and party gain.<sup>36</sup> Former PDM leader Vladimir Plahotniuc (who is subject to U.S. and EU sanctions for corruption) and former PLDM leader (and ex-prime minister) Vlad Filat are among those who have faced criminal charges over a 2014 bank fraud scandal in which an estimated \$1 billion, equivalent to more than 12% of Moldova’s gross domestic product (GDP) at the time, went missing from three Moldovan banks.<sup>37</sup> Plahotniuc (and the PDM) dominated Moldovan politics from 2016 to 2019.<sup>38</sup> Plahotniuc left

<sup>32</sup> European Commission, “Commission Opinion on the Republic of Moldova’s Application for Membership of the European Union,” June 17, 2022.

<sup>33</sup> UN Refugee Agency, *Ukraine Refugee Situation*, as of May 31, 2025, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.

<sup>34</sup> European Commission, *Republic of Moldova 2024 Report*, October 30, 2024.

<sup>35</sup> See discussion in Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2024: Moldova*; Madalin Necsutu, “Moldova’s Moves Against Pro-Russian Media Trigger Censorship Debate,” *Balkan Insight*, June 3, 2024; *Moldova 1*, “Promo-LEX Criticizes the Proposed Amendments to the Contravention Code Regarding Hate Speech and Online Disinformation,” March 24, 2025; and CSO Meter, “Moldova: Sanctions on Paid Participation in Assemblies Raise Freedom of Assembly Concerns,” May 12, 2025.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Wilson, “Filat’s Gamble,” *openDemocracy*, May 23, 2013; Kamil Calus, “A Captured State? Moldova’s Uncertain Prospects for Modernization,” OSW, April 22, 2015; Madalin Necsutu, “Vlad Plahotniuc, Moldova’s Unloved ‘Puppet Master’,” *Balkan Insight*, December 18, 2017; and Marc Behrendt and Gina S. Lentine, “Moldova’s Crisis Offers Chance to Reform a Captured State,” *Balkan Insight*, July 11, 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Tim Whewell, “The Great Moldovan Bank Robbery,” *BBC News*, June 18, 2015; RFE/RL, “Moldovan Parliament Publishes Second Report on \$1 Billion Bank Fraud,” July 5, 2019; U.S. State Department, “Public Designation, Due to Involvement in Significant Corruption, of Former Moldovan Official Plahotniuc,” January 13, 2020; and U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Treasury Targets Corruption and the Kremlin’s Malign Influence Operations in Moldova,” October 26, 2022. On Plahotniuc’s legal appeal of EU sanctions, see Official Journal of the European Union, “Judgment of the General Court of 23 October 2024 – Plahotniuc v Council,” OJ C, C/2024/7336, December 16, 2024.

<sup>38</sup> In 2016, Vlad Filat was convicted on corruption-related charges and sentenced to nine years in prison; he was released on parole in 2019 after an appeals court reduced his sentence. Kamil Calus, “Moldova: From Oligarchic Pluralism to Plahotniuc’s Hegemony,” OSW, April 11, 2016; RFE/RL, “Former Moldovan PM Jailed for Nine Years,” June 27, 2016; and RFE/RL, “Former Moldovan PM Convicted of Bribery Released from Prison,” December 4, 2019.

Moldova in 2019 when the PDM lost power, and he was subsequently indicted in absentia.<sup>39</sup> In July 2025, Moldovan authorities announced that Plahotniuc had been arrested in Greece and that they would seek his extradition.<sup>40</sup>

Businessman and former politician Ilan Shor (or Șor) also has been tried and convicted in absentia over the 2014 bank fraud case. Shor, who is subject to U.S. and EU sanctions for enabling Russian interference, reportedly now resides in Russia but remains involved in Moldovan political affairs through allied political parties and proxies.<sup>41</sup> Shor fled Moldova in 2019 while appealing a seven-year sentence for his role in the bank fraud scandal. From abroad, Shor continued to formally lead the populist, Russia-linked Shor Party, which came in third place in the 2021 parliamentary election (with 6% of votes and 6 seats). In 2023, an appeals court upheld Shor's conviction, increased his sentence to 15 years in prison, and ordered the confiscation of nearly \$300 million in assets. Moldova's Constitutional Court subsequently dissolved the Shor Party for not complying with Moldova's laws and constitution; its parliamentary deputies were allowed to remain in parliament.<sup>42</sup> Candidates from an offshoot of the Shor Party were barred from competing in Moldova's 2023 local elections.<sup>43</sup>

In July 2025, a Shor-affiliated bloc, Victory, held an event in Moscow, Russia, in which Shor and his political associates announced the bloc's intent to compete in Moldova's September 2025 parliamentary election. During the event, Shor expressed support for Moldova's "union" with Russia and declared the lead candidate for the bloc would be Shor associate Evghenia Gutsul, the leader of Gagauzia, who at the time was facing charges in Moldova related to corruption and illicit finance; in August 2025, Gutsul was sentenced to seven years in prison and banned from holding political office for five years.<sup>44</sup> A spokesperson for the Moldovan government denounced the event and Shor's rhetoric as "part of an already well-known scenario of undermining the state and citizens of the Republic of Moldova, written according to the propaganda manual of the Russian Federation."<sup>45</sup>

Moldova's Central Electoral Commission subsequently announced that it had rejected Victory's application to register for the election, noting among other factors Shor's direct involvement.<sup>46</sup> The EU imposed sanctions on the Victory bloc and related individuals and entities for seeking to

<sup>39</sup> RFE/RL, "Moldova Charges Plahotniuc in \$1 Billion Fraud, Will Seek Extradition," May 19, 2020; and Madalin Necsutu, "Moldovan Oligarch Plahotniuc Faces Trial in 'Grand Theft' Case," *Balkan Insight*, May 30, 2023.

<sup>40</sup> Associated Press, "Fugitive Moldovan Oligarch Implicated in \$1 Billion Bank Fraud Detained in Greece," July 22, 2025.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Targets Corruption and the Kremlin's Malign Influence Operations in Moldova," October 26, 2022; Madalin Necsutu, "Moldovan Fugitive Oligarch Launches New Anti-EU Bloc in Moscow," *Balkan Insight*, April 22, 2024; and RFE/RL, "Fugitive Moldovan Oligarch Gets Russian Citizenship," May 16, 2024.

<sup>42</sup> Iulian Ernst, "Fugitive Businessman Promises to Recover \$1bn Stolen from Moldovan Banks," *bne IntelliNews*, May 4, 2021; Associated Press, "Oligarch Sentenced for Role in Stealing \$1B from Moldovan Banks," April 14, 2023; and Alexander Tanas, "Moldova Bans Pro-Russian Shor Party After Months of Protests," Reuters, June 19, 2023.

<sup>43</sup> For further background, see Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Republic of Moldova – Local Elections 5 November 2023, ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, March 18, 2024.

<sup>44</sup> Gagauzia's regional legislature condemned the verdict and affirmed Evghenia Gutsul's continued leadership. Veronika Melkozerova, "Moldova Sentences Pro-Russian Politician to 7 Years in Prison over Illegal Party Financing," *Politico*, August 5, 2025; and *bne IntelliNews*, "Moldova's Gagauzia Refuses to Recognize Prison Sentence for Pro-Russian Governor Gutsul," August 7, 2025.

<sup>45</sup> As quoted in David Smith, "Moldova Hosts a Summit with the EU, While Shor Calls for Russian Annexation in Moscow," *Moldova Matters*, July 11, 2025. Also see Daniela Savin, "Chișinău Condemns Ilan Shor's Congress in Moscow, Calling It 'An Act of Treason,'" *Moldova 1*, July 9, 2025.

<sup>46</sup> CEC, "CEC a refuzat inregistrarea unui bloc electoral," July 19, 2025.

undermine Moldova’s sovereignty and independence, stability, and democracy.<sup>47</sup> Gutsul also has been subject to U.S. and EU sanctions since 2024 for her involvement in Shor’s illicit finance network.<sup>48</sup>

## Economy and Energy

The World Bank has stated that Moldova, one of Europe’s poorest countries, “faces significant poverty, especially in rural areas, despite sustained economic growth” and an overall improvement in economic conditions since the 1990s.<sup>49</sup> In 2024, Moldova’s estimated GDP was about \$18.2 billion; estimated GDP per capita was about \$7,480.<sup>50</sup> In 2024, 34% of the population lived in poverty.<sup>51</sup>

In 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, Moldova’s GDP declined by more than 8%; it rebounded the next year with almost 14% growth. Moldova’s GDP declined by 4.6% in 2022 and grew by 1.2% in 2023.<sup>52</sup> In 2024, a drought-related drop in agricultural output contributed to slower growth by an estimated 0.5%.<sup>53</sup> Moldova faced high inflation in 2022 and 2023, due in part to the economic impact of Russia’s war against Ukraine. After reaching a height of 35% in October 2022, the annual rate of inflation gradually declined, although it increased somewhat in the first half of 2025.<sup>54</sup>

Looking ahead, Moldova’s economy may be boosted by planned public investments (with some support from a new EU assistance package; see “Relations with Europe and NATO”), recovery in the agricultural harvest, and real wage growth. At the same time, Moldova’s economy faces potential headwinds from increased energy costs and could be sensitive to developments in the EU economy.<sup>55</sup>

In 2024, about 55% of Moldova’s total merchandise trade (including two-thirds of its exports) was with the EU. Moldova’s next three top trading partners were Ukraine (11%), China (10%), and Turkey (7%). Moldova’s top exports include electrical parts, oil seeds, cereals, fruit and nuts, and alcoholic beverages.<sup>56</sup> Personal remittances from migrant workers abroad (primarily in Europe) amounted to about 12% of Moldova’s GDP in 2023.<sup>57</sup>

A landlocked country, Moldova has access to the Black Sea via a port on the Danube River near the southern town of Giurgeleşti, which borders both Romania and Ukraine (see **Figure 1**). Since 2022, the Giurgeleşti International Free Port has gained regional significance as a transit port for

<sup>47</sup> Council of the European Union, “Republic of Moldova: Council Lists Seven Individuals and Three Entities for Actions Destabilising the Country,” July 15, 2025.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Taking Additional Measures to Degrade Russia’s Wartime Economy,” June 12, 2024; and European Commission, EU Sanctions Tracker, “Evghenia Guțulová.”

<sup>49</sup> World Bank Group in Moldova, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/moldova>.

<sup>50</sup> International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook* database, April 2025 update. Figures are in current prices.

<sup>51</sup> NBS, Household Budget Survey, “Absolute Poverty Measures by Areas, 2014-2024” (excluding Transnistria).

<sup>52</sup> IMF, *World Economic Outlook* database, April 2025 update.

<sup>53</sup> European Commission, *European Economic Forecast Spring 2025*, May 2025.

<sup>54</sup> National Bank of Moldova (NBM), “Annual Inflation,” <https://www.bnm.md/en/content/inflation>.

<sup>55</sup> European Commission, *European Economic Forecast Spring 2025*, May 2025.

<sup>56</sup> UN Comtrade, as reported in Trade Data Monitor, an online database.

<sup>57</sup> NBM, *International Accounts of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Yearbook 2023*, p. 48.

Ukrainian grain exports and fuel imports.<sup>58</sup> In 2021, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) became the sole owner of the Giurgeleşti port operator; in April 2025, the EBRD announced it was launching a process to secure long-term investors for the port.<sup>59</sup> The Romanian government has expressed interest in investing in the port.<sup>60</sup>

Russia has had a prominent role in Moldova's energy supply. Prior to the start of Russia's war against Ukraine in 2022, Moldova relied on Russian imports for its natural gas. Moldova stopped importing natural gas from Russia beginning in late 2022, but about 80% of Moldova's electricity continued to be generated by a Transnistrian plant powered by subsidized Russian natural gas until 2025 (see "Russian Influence in Moldova").<sup>61</sup> The Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom holds a majority stake in Moldovagaz, Moldova's largest energy company.

With U.S. and EU assistance, Moldova has taken steps to diversify gas suppliers and supply routes, offset higher energy costs, and accelerate its electricity market's integration with Europe.<sup>62</sup> Moldovan authorities also commissioned an independent audit that disputed the legitimacy of a roughly \$710 million debt claim from Gazprom.<sup>63</sup> Moldovan authorities have taken steps to reduce Moldovagaz's role in gas transmission and supply (as part of a process to comply with EU energy market rules).<sup>64</sup> Ongoing and planned power line connections to Romania aim to expand cross-border transfer capacity and deepen Moldova's integration with EU energy systems.<sup>65</sup> In December 2024, Moldova's energy minister resigned after facing criticism over inadequate preparations for impending cuts to gas supplies from Russia (see below).<sup>66</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Vanora Bennett, "Moldova's Strategic Danube Port Offers a Lifeline for Ukraine," European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), July 8, 2022.

<sup>59</sup> Vanora Bennett, "EBRD Launches Global Tender to Find New Investor for Moldova's Strategic Port," EBRD, April 14, 2025; and Iulian Ernst, "EBRD Seeks to Sell Moldova's Strategic Giurgiulesti Port amid Legal Dispute," *bne IntelliNews*, April 14, 2025.

<sup>60</sup> RFE/RL, "Romania Gives Green Light to Start Talks on Stake in Moldovan Danube River Port," August 28, 2024; and *IPN*, "Romania Has Submitted a Bid to Buy the Port of Giurgiulesti," May 16, 2025.

<sup>61</sup> *Interfax*, "Moldova Declares Readiness to Meet Energy Needs Without Power Plant in Transnistria," December 24, 2024; Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova, "Gas Market—From the Gazprom Monopoly to Gas from Different Sources and Regions of the World," April 3, 2024; and Kamil Calus, "Moldova: An Impending Energy Crisis and Its Political Implications," OSW, December 13, 2024.

<sup>62</sup> European Commission, "The EU Offers Emergency Support to Tackle the Energy Crisis in Moldova," January 26, 2025; U.S. Embassy in Moldova, "United States Announces Substantial Additional Assistance for Moldova," September 17, 2024; "Reuters, "Moldova Will No Longer Buy Gas from Russia's Gazprom—Energy Minister," October 2, 2023; and Leo Litra, "The Final Frontier: Ending Moldova's Dependency on Russian Gas," European Council on Foreign Relations, November 1, 2023.

<sup>63</sup> Government of Moldova, "Moldova Rejects Gazprom's Alleged Debt Post-Audit," September 6, 2023; and Iulian Ernst, "Moldovagaz's Head Says \$709mn Debt to Gazprom Close to Being Settled," *bne Intelinews*, January 19, 2025.

<sup>64</sup> Razvan Timpscuc, "Romania's Transgaz Unit to Operate Moldova's Gas Transmission System," *SeeNews*, September 5, 2023; Energy Community, *Moldova: Annual Implementation Report*, November 1, 2024; and *Interfax*, "Moldova's Energocom Appointed as Country's Gas Supplier in Place of Gazprom Subsidiary," May 23, 2025.

<sup>65</sup> International Press Agency, "Third Moldova-Romania Interconnection Power Line to be Built," April 30, 2024; and *Moldpres*, "Moldova's Energy Minister Says Crises in Energy Sector, Triggered by Russia, Transformed into Development Opportunities," June 17, 2025.

<sup>66</sup> Alexander Tanas, "Moldova Sacks Energy Minister over Failure to Tackle Crisis," Reuters, December 5, 2024; and Suriya Evans-Pritchard Jayanti, "Moldova Is the Real Loser from the End of Russian Gas Transit Through Ukraine," Atlantic Council, January 10, 2025.

## Russian Influence in Moldova

With a divided electorate and political class, Moldova has been a target for Russian political interference efforts and influence operations. From 1998 to 2019, Russian-leaning political parties—the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) and, since 2014, the PSRM (a PCRM offshoot)—placed first in Moldovan parliamentary elections; these parties’ leaders also held the presidency from, respectively, 2001 to 2009 and 2016 to 2020. The PCRM and PSRM could not always form governments, however, somewhat constraining Russian influence efforts even prior to the election of the pro-European President Sandu and PAS in 2020-2021.

Moldova’s trade relationship with Russia has declined over the past two decades and represented 2.6% of Moldova’s total trade in 2024 (down from more than 20% in 2004).<sup>67</sup> This decline was driven in part by Russia’s periodic imposition of bans on certain imports from Moldova (e.g., wine and agricultural products), as well as by an agreement between Moldova and the EU (in force since 2016) that has liberalized most areas of Moldova-EU trade.<sup>68</sup> The number of Moldovan labor migrants in Russia—as well as the share of personal remittances received from Moldovans in Russia—also has declined significantly.<sup>69</sup> As noted above, some ties to Russia’s energy sector have persisted, notwithstanding measures to reduce reliance on Russia since 2022.

Since the election of President Sandu and PAS in 2020-2021, Moldovan, U.S., and European officials, as well as election and disinformation monitoring organizations, have accused Russia of seeking to subvert Moldova’s democratic institutions and pro-European trajectory, including via the illicit financing of political parties, election interference, and propaganda and disinformation campaigns. After Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, concerns arose in Moldova, Europe, and the United States that Moscow could seek to invade Moldova. The near-term threat of a Russian invasion receded as Ukrainian forces halted Russia’s military advance in southern Ukraine, but concerns about Russian malign influence and potential future aggression persist. In June 2025, Prime Minister Recean, citing Moldovan intelligence assessments, stated that a goal of alleged Russian efforts to interfere in Moldova’s September 2025 parliamentary election is to elect a more Russia-friendly government and subsequently deploy additional Russian troops to Transnistria.<sup>70</sup>

Some observers previously accused Russia of providing illicit support to the PSRM and ex-President Dodon, but since their loss of power Russian influence efforts appear to have focused on boosting alternative political forces.<sup>71</sup> These efforts mainly have been linked to fugitive

<sup>67</sup> UN Comtrade, as reported in Trade Data Monitor.

<sup>68</sup> Tessa Dunlop, “Why Russian Wine Ban Is Putting Pressure on Moldova,” BBC, November 21, 2013; Kamil Calus, “Russia’s Embargo on Moldovan Goods Is Extended,” OSW, July 23, 2014; and Alexander Tanas, “Moldova Denounces New Russian Ban on Fruit Imports,” Reuters, December 1, 2023.

<sup>69</sup> In 2013, personal remittances from Russia accounted for about 63% of all personal remittances received in Moldova. By 2022, the share of personal remittances from Russia and other post-Soviet countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States, a Russia-led grouping, had dropped to about 13%. During this same period, the number of Moldovan citizens working in Russia reportedly dropped from an estimated 600,000 to less than 100,000. NBM, *International Accounts of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Yearbook 2016*, p. 62, and *Statistical Yearbook 2023*, p. 86; and Kamil Calus, *The Russian Hybrid Threat Toolbox in Moldova: Economic, Political, and Social Dimensions*, Hybrid Center of Excellence Working Paper No. 23, April 2023, pp. 9-10.

<sup>70</sup> Henry Foy and Polina Ivanova, “Russia Wants to Deploy 10,000 Troops in Moldovan Breakaway Region, PM Warns,” *Financial Times*, June 4, 2025; and *Radio Moldova*, “Maia Sandu Warns of Russia’s Growing Military Presence,” June 13, 2025.

<sup>71</sup> Madalin Necsutu, “Russian Advisers ‘Working for Moldovan President’s Re-Election Campaign,’” *Balkan Insight*, (continued...)

political and business figure Ilan Shor (see “Reform Agenda and Challenges”). Ahead of local elections in November 2023, Moldovan officials accused Russia of illicitly financing pro-Russian parties, disinformation campaigns, and vote-buying efforts.<sup>72</sup> Russia allegedly interfered in Moldova’s 2024 election with the aim of preventing Sandu’s reelection and passage of the EU referendum. In June 2024, the governments of the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement assessing that Russia was “seeking to undermine Moldovan democratic institutions” in the lead-up to the election through disinformation campaigns and other interference tactics.<sup>73</sup> According to Moldovan and U.S. officials, Russia illicitly financed a major vote-buying operation overseen by Shor and his allies. Moldovan authorities alleged that at least \$39 million was transferred from Russia to thousands of bank accounts in Moldova, and they estimated that over 80,000 Moldovans received payments to vote as instructed.<sup>74</sup> Other alleged actions by Russia-linked actors included vandalism, preparations for postelection protests, and false bomb threats against voting sites in Europe.<sup>75</sup> Moldovan authorities have investigated, prosecuted, or convicted politicians for corruption or illicit financing in connection with Shor’s network (also see “Reform Agenda and Challenges”).<sup>76</sup>

In early 2025, Moldovan officials and some outside observers accused Russia of engineering an energy crisis to undercut support for the PAS government ahead of the 2025 parliamentary election.<sup>77</sup> Moldova (minus Transnistria) had phased out importation of Russian gas but, as noted above, continued to rely on electricity from Transnistria generated by Russian gas. Coinciding with the expiration of a gas transit agreement between Russia and Ukraine, Gazprom halted gas delivery to Transnistria on January 1, 2025, cutting off supplies to the Transnistrian plant used to generate most of Moldova’s electricity (Gazprom declined to deliver gas to Transnistria via alternative transit routes). The supply cut had immediate impacts, particularly in Transnistria, where wintertime disruptions to electricity, heating, and hot water raised humanitarian concerns. Moldova was able to import electricity from Romania and Ukraine but at significantly higher

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October 20, 2020; Vladimir Socor, “Russia Abandons Moldovan Clients, Will Deal with the New Pro-Western Government,” Jamestown Foundation, July 15, 2021; and RISE Moldova, “Russian Money for Dodon,” November 10, 2022.

<sup>72</sup> Alexander Tanas, “Moldovan President Says Russia Is ‘Buying’ Voters, Seeks Backing for Pro-Europe Policies,” Reuters, November 1, 2023; and RFE/RL, “Mayor of Moldovan Capital Reelected in Blow to President’s Pro-Western Party,” November 6, 2023.

<sup>73</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement Exposing Russia’s Subversive Activity and Electoral Interference Targeting Moldova,” June 13, 2024.

<sup>74</sup> As of mid-April 2025, authorities said that about 6,000 people had received fines for their involvement in the operation. U.S. Mission to the OSCE, “On the November 3 Run-Off Round in Moldova’s Presidential Election,” November 7, 2024; OSCE, *Moldova: Presidential Election and Constitutional Referendum—Final Report*, March 14, 2025; and David Smith, “Weekly Roundup: Elections Called for September,” *Moldova Matters*, April 17, 2025.

<sup>75</sup> Daniel Bellamy, “Moldova Accuses Russia of Organizing Pre-Election Vandalism of State Buildings,” *EuroNews*, September 29, 2024; Alexander Tanas, “Moldova Says Its Citizens Were Trained in Russia to Stage Riots,” Reuters, October 20, 2024; and Jennifer Rankin, “Germany Accuses Russia of ‘Massive’ Effort to Stop Moldovans Abroad Voting,” *Guardian*, November 4, 2024.

<sup>76</sup> Moldovan authorities accused the Russian Embassy in Moldova of assisting one parliamentary deputy with evading arrest following his conviction for illicit financing. *Moldova Live*, “Marina Tauber Faces the Risk of Imprisonment for Interfering in the Administration of Justice. The Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office (PA) Has Provided Details,” April 2, 2024; National Anticorruption Center, “A Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova Sentenced to 12 Years in Prison and Ordered to Pay over 1.1 Million Lei,” March 19, 2025; and Alexander Tanas, “Moldova Expels Russian Diplomats After Accusing Embassy of Helping Convicted Lawmaker Escape,” Reuters, March 31, 2025.

<sup>77</sup> Kamil Calus, “Russia’s Gas Crisis Game in Transnistria,” OSW, January 8, 2025; and Vladimir Solovyov, “Transnistria’s Energy Crisis Could Backfire on Moscow,” Carnegie Endowment, January 11, 2025.

costs. In response to the energy crisis, the EU announced additional aid packages for Moldova, including for Transnistria (see “Transnistria Region: Conflict Resolution Efforts” below).<sup>78</sup>

Ahead of the parliamentary election scheduled for September 2025, potential Russian influence continues to be a concern. In December 2024, the director of Moldova’s Security and Intelligence Service warned that Russia intends to interfere with the election using tactics including vote-buying, disinformation, and fomenting unrest.<sup>79</sup> In a July 2025 Moldova-EU summit declaration, EU and Moldovan leaders stated that “we strongly condemn the persistent and increasing hybrid threats posed by Russia aiming to undermine democratic elections in Moldova, including information manipulation and interference, and the use of large-scale electoral corruption through local proxies.”<sup>80</sup> Moldova is weighing measures to impose stricter penalties for vote-buying schemes and address other forms of electoral corruption.<sup>81</sup> Moldovan officials have said that Russia may seek to foment a crisis in Transnistria ahead of the election.<sup>82</sup>

## Transnistria Region: Conflict Resolution Efforts

Since 1991, Russia has backed the de facto secession of Moldova’s Transnistria region (see **Figure 1**).<sup>83</sup> Transnistria is currently home to about 13% of Moldova’s population, according to official data. A majority of Transnistria’s residents have Moldovan citizenship; many also have Russian citizenship.<sup>84</sup> Despite its de facto autonomy and Russia-leaning political orientation, Transnistria has strong economic links to the rest of Moldova and the EU. The EU is the destination for most Transnistria-origin exports (and the source of more than half the region’s imports).<sup>85</sup> The region’s main exports consist of metal products, agricultural and food products, and textiles and apparel.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>78</sup> European Commission, “The EU Offers Emergency Support to Tackle the Energy Crisis in Moldova,” January 26, 2025; and European Commission, “European Commission and Moldova Agree on a 2-year Comprehensive Strategy for Energy Independence and Resilience and Immediate Support with the Energy Bills,” February 4, 2025.

<sup>79</sup> Security and Intelligence Service of the Republic of Moldova, “External Interference in Electoral Processes in the Republic of Moldova,” December 12, 2024; and Andrew Wilson, *The Bear Behind the Ballot: Moldova’s Election in the Shadow of War*, European Council on Foreign Relations, June 30, 2025.

<sup>80</sup> European Commission, “Joint Declaration Following the First Republic of Moldova—EU Summit,” July 4, 2025. Also see Presidency of the Republic of Moldova, “Moldovan President’s Statements Following Supreme Security Council’s Meeting from July 30, 2025,” July 30, 2025; and Gabriel Gavin, “Russia Targeting Voters Across EU, Moldova Warns,” *Politico Europe*, August 4, 2025.

<sup>81</sup> Radio Moldova, “Moldova Cracks Down on Electoral Corruption in 2025 Race,” April 15, 2025; and *Infotag*, “Parliament Adopted in Final Reading Law on ‘Effectively Combating Phenomenon of Electoral Corruption,’” May 22, 2025.

<sup>82</sup> Tim Zadorozhnyy, “Russia May Provoke Crisis in Transnistria Ahead of Moldova’s Elections, Sandu Warns,” *Kyiv Independent*, June 13, 2025.

<sup>83</sup> Authorities in Transnistria formally refer to the region as the *Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic* (or PMR).

<sup>84</sup> According to Moldovan authorities, at the end of June 2025 Transnistria had a population of about 375,000, of which about 347,000 formally held Moldovan citizenship (about 265,000 held national identification cards, and about 234,000 held Moldovan passports). In February 2024, an assembly of Transnistrian authorities issued a resolution that stated that more than 220,000 residents of the region had Russian citizenship. David Smith, “Quiet in Transnistria, Sound and Fury in the West,” *Moldova Matters*, March 1, 2024; and Government of the Republic of Moldova, “347,161 Residents of the Transnistrian Region Hold Citizenship of the Republic of Moldova,” July 16, 2025.

<sup>85</sup> In 2024, 83% of Transnistria-origin exports went to the EU, and 54% of the region’s imports came from the EU. In 2021, before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, about 60% of Transnistria-origin exports were to the EU. Government of the Republic of Moldova, “Exports from the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova to the Member States of the European Union Reached the 83% Threshold in 2024,” January 15, 2025.

<sup>86</sup> EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), *Annual Report (1 December 2023–30 November 2024)*, p. 16.

Moldovan law officially supports the negotiated establishment of a special administrative status for Transnistria following the withdrawal of Russian forces from the region.<sup>87</sup> Russia stations an estimated 1,500 troops in Transnistria, most of whom reportedly are local residents. About 400-500 of these personnel serve as members of a joint peacekeeping mission that also formally includes the participation of Moldovan and local Transnistrian forces.<sup>88</sup> Other Russian forces are stationed at a large Soviet-era munitions depot near the settlement of Cobasna (in the northern part of Transnistria); for decades, Russia has declined to dismantle the depot and withdraw its troops.<sup>89</sup>

In 2017, Moldova's Constitutional Court ruled that the stationing of foreign troops in Moldova was unconstitutional and Moldova's parliament adopted a declaration calling on Russia to withdraw its forces. In 2018, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution also calling on Russia to withdraw its troops from Moldova "unconditionally and without further delay."<sup>90</sup>

Prior to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, a conflict resolution process for Transnistria operated with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Russia, and Ukraine as mediators and the EU and the United States as observers.<sup>91</sup> This so-called "5+2" format has been largely inactive since 2022. Since that time, Moldovan and Transnistrian authorities have held direct talks with OSCE participation.<sup>92</sup> Moldovan and Transnistrian authorities also have convened working groups to address issues related to transit, education, agriculture, health care, vital records, and other issues.<sup>93</sup> Amid the Russia-induced energy crisis in early 2025 (see "Economy and Energy"), authorities in Transnistria agreed to release several detained Moldovan nationals, air Moldovan public broadcasting, and make additional concessions in exchange for the Moldovan government's agreement to allow the transit of gas to Transnistria.<sup>94</sup>

Russia's war against Ukraine has led to various pressures on Transnistria. The region is home to many ethnic Ukrainians, and its Russia-aligned authorities appeared to avoid overtly supporting Russia's invasion.<sup>95</sup> In 2022, Ukraine closed its border with Transnistria, leading to a decline in regional exports and facilitating Moldova's establishment of tighter control over regional trade

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<sup>87</sup> Law No. 173 of July 22, 2005, at [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=142463&lang=ro#](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=142463&lang=ro#).

<sup>88</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2025*, p. 180; and Thomas de Waal, "A Fragile Stability in Moldova," *Carnegie Europe*, May 10, 2022.

<sup>89</sup> Ilie Gulca, "Cobana: Russia's 'MacGuffin' Between Ukraine and NATO," *Balkan Insight*, March 20, 2023.

<sup>90</sup> Ana Maria Tourna, "Moldova Asks Russian Troops to Quit Transnistria," *Balkan Insight*, July 21, 2017; and UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/282, June 22, 2018.

<sup>91</sup> OSCE Mission to Moldova, "Conflict Prevention and Resolution," <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-moldova/104529>. In addition, the EU has supported conflict management through EUBAM.

<sup>92</sup> Government of the Republic of Moldova, "Political and OSCE Representatives Discussed in Bender the Most Current Topics That Concern Both Banks of the Nistru River," April 8, 2025.

<sup>93</sup> Government of the Republic of Moldova, Bureau for Reintegration Policies, <https://gov.md/index.php/en/working-groups>. Related information is available at <https://gov.md/en/tags/datestatisticereintegrare>.

<sup>94</sup> Anton Filippov, "What Concessions Did Transnistria Make for Russian Gas, and How Will It Reach Moldova?," *European Pravda*, February 11, 2025; and Madalin Necsutu, "Prisoners for Gas: Moldova Leverages Energy Crisis to Secure Rebel Concessions," *Balkan Insight*, March 4, 2025.

<sup>95</sup> Keith Harrington, "Moldova's Rebel Region Stays Neutral in Russia's War on Ukraine," *Balkan Insight*, March 11, 2022; and Nikolai Kuzmin, "Isolated Transnistria Shaken by Tremors of War in Nearby Ukraine," *Balkan Insight*, June 28, 2022.

and transit.<sup>96</sup> In 2024, Moldovan authorities harmonized customs duties on Transnistria-origin goods, requiring businesses in the region to pay duties to Moldova.<sup>97</sup>

The natural gas shortage caused by Russia's termination of natural gas deliveries at the start of 2025 led to both wintertime shortages and a more protracted economic crisis as industrial output declined. EU assistance to Moldova in response to Russia's gas cutoff included funding to supply natural gas to Transnistria on an emergency basis during the first 10 days of February.<sup>98</sup> Authorities in Transnistria turned down further EU assistance for the rest of the winter season. Instead, they reached a loan agreement with Russia, facilitated by Hungarian and United Arab Emirates intermediaries, to purchase some European natural gas but at levels insufficient for the region's industrial use.<sup>99</sup>

## Relations with Europe and NATO

The current government of Moldova pursues a pro-European foreign policy. The EU is Moldova's top trade partner and a major source of development and security assistance. As noted above, the October 2024 referendum on constitutionally enshrining the goal of EU membership passed 50.4% to 49.6%. At the same time, military neutrality is enshrined in Moldova's constitution, and Moldova presently does not aspire to join NATO. Moldova maintains close relations with the EU and NATO, and especially with Romania, an EU and NATO member. Since 2022, Moldova has taken steps to enhance security cooperation with some NATO members, including France.<sup>100</sup> In 2024, Moldova became the first country to sign a Security and Defense Partnership agreement with the EU; the agreement aims to enhance Moldova's democratic resilience and facilitate security cooperation.<sup>101</sup> Under a separate initiative since 2023, the EU has maintained a civilian Partnership Mission in Moldova, which aims to bolster Moldova's resilience to hybrid threats.<sup>102</sup> Moldova and the EU convened a high-level summit in Chişinău on July 4, 2025.<sup>103</sup>

From 2021 to 2024, the EU provided an estimated €2.2 billion (\$2.6 billion at current exchange rates) in grants and loans to Moldova.<sup>104</sup> For the period 2025 to 2027, the EU has outlined a €1.9 billion (\$2.2 billion) assistance package for Moldova (officially titled the "Reform and Growth Facility for Moldova") that aims to boost economic growth and investment and to accelerate

<sup>96</sup> According to EUBAM, the value of Transnistria-origin exports declined by more than 50% from 2021 to 2024 (\$698 million to \$341 million). EUBAM, *Annual Report (1 December 2023–30 November 2024)*, pp. 12, 16.

<sup>97</sup> Kamil Calus, "Moldova Is Increasing the Pressure on Transnistria," OSW, January 17, 2024; and Laurențiu Pleşca, "All Quiet on the Moldovan Front," German Marshall Fund, March 21, 2024.

<sup>98</sup> See footnote 78.

<sup>99</sup> Iryna Perepechko, "Transnistria Will Purchase Gas from Hungary Using a Loan from Russia," *Babel*, February 10, 2025; Tim Zadorozhnyy, "Transnistria Again Declares Economic Emergency over Russian Gas Cut," *Kyiv Independent*, June 11, 2025; and Iulian Ernst, "Separatists in Transnistria Face Deep Economic Contraction as Russia Restricts Subsidies," *bne IntelliNews*, June 20, 2025.

<sup>100</sup> Kamil Calus, "Moldova: Enhancing Military Cooperation with the West," OSW, September 25, 2023; and Reuters, "France and Moldova to Sign Defense Pact Amid Fears of Russian Destabilization," March 6, 2024.

<sup>101</sup> Delegation of the EU to the Republic of Moldova, "Security and Defense Partnership," May 21, 2024.

<sup>102</sup> Council of the EU, "Moldova: Council Extends the Mandate of the EU Civilian Mission for Two Years," May 21, 2025.

<sup>103</sup> European Commission, "Joint Declaration Following the First Republic of Moldova–EU Summit," July 4, 2025.

<sup>104</sup> This assistance included approximately €240 million (\$279 million) in energy-related direct budget support. European Commission, "Moldova 2024 Enlargement Package Factsheet," updated October 30, 2024; and European Commission, "Enlargement and Eastern Neighborhood: Moldova," n.d.

adoption of EU reforms.<sup>105</sup> Since 2021, the EU has committed to an estimated €197 million (\$233 million) in assistance to Moldova’s armed forces to support procurement of military equipment and capabilities (including short-range air defense systems).<sup>106</sup>

## EU Membership Bid

The EU granted Moldova (along with Ukraine) candidate status in June 2022, three months after Moldova applied for membership in response to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. As noted above, the EU identified nine criteria, largely centered on governance and the rule of law, for Moldova to meet in order to move forward in the accession process. In December 2023, EU member states approved opening accession negotiations with Moldova (together with Ukraine); formal negotiations began in June 2024.<sup>107</sup> An EU screening process is underway to assess Moldova’s alignment with the EU’s comprehensive body of laws and regulations (the *acquis communautaire*, divided into 35 chapters grouped into six thematic “clusters”).<sup>108</sup> Following this screening process, the EU and Moldova may begin negotiating changes or reforms Moldova would need to adopt to bring its legislation and institutions in line with those of the EU. Moldovan officials aim to open the first “fundamentals” cluster, which addresses core democratic and economic criteria, in 2025.<sup>109</sup>

In recognizing Moldova (alongside Ukraine) as an EU candidate and backing its relatively swift advancement through the early steps of the accession process, EU officials cited Moldova’s reform progress and underscored the geopolitical significance of enlargement in the wake of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, the process of joining the EU can take many years and EU membership is not a guaranteed outcome. Many decisionmaking points in the EU accession process require unanimous consent from EU member states, potentially complicating or slowing Moldova’s progress toward membership.

<sup>105</sup> Disbursal of funds is to be linked to conditions in the Reform Agenda for Moldova, which the EU and Moldova adopted in May 2025. European Commission, *Communication on the Moldova Growth Plan*, October 9, 2024; European Council, “Moldova: Council Gives Final Green Light to Support Reforms and Economic Growth with €1.9 Billion,” March 18, 2025; and Regional Communication Program for the Eastern Neighborhood, “EU and Moldova Sign EU Reform and Growth Plan for Moldova,” May 9, 2025.

<sup>106</sup> Council of the EU, “European Peace Facility: Council Adopts Two Assistance Measures in Support of Moldovan Armed Forces,” April 24, 2025.

<sup>107</sup> Member states approved the Negotiating Framework for Moldova on June 21, 2024, paving the way for opening negotiations at the first Intergovernmental Conference on June 25. European Council, *European Council Meeting (14 & 15 December 2023)—Conclusions*, December 15, 2023; RFE/RL, “EU to Open Accession Negotiations with Ukraine, Moldova on June 25,” June 21, 2024; and European Commission, “EU Opens Accession Negotiations with Moldova,” June 25, 2024.

<sup>108</sup> For more on the EU enlargement process, see European Commission, “Steps Towards Joining,” n.d.

<sup>109</sup> Madalin Necsutu, “Moldova Marks Third Anniversary of EU Bid with Hope and Trepidation,” *Balkan Insight*, March 12, 2025.

<sup>110</sup> RFE/RL, “Von Der Leyen Commends Moldova’s ‘Remarkable’ Progress Toward EU Integration,” October 13, 2023; European Commission, “Statement by President von der Leyen on Opening Accession Negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova,” June 25, 2024; and European Commission, *2024 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy*, October 30, 2024. For comparison, Montenegro—the EU candidate that is farthest along in the accession process—applied for EU membership in 2008, was recognized as a candidate in 2010, and began accession negotiations in 2012.

## U.S.-Moldova Relations

A 2024 joint statement by the U.S. and Moldovan governments said that “the United States stands with Moldova in supporting its long-term democratic and economic reform efforts, as well as its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.”<sup>111</sup> Following Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. and Moldovan governments launched a bilateral strategic dialogue focused on defense and security cooperation, Moldova’s EU integration efforts and related reforms, economic and energy security, and people-to-people ties.<sup>112</sup> In November 2024, then-U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken “commend[ed] the people of Moldova for their commitment to a democracy that reflects the will of the people and for protecting their election from an unprecedented level of [Russian] interference.”<sup>113</sup> In December 2024, the U.S. Department of State and Moldova’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated they had “agreed to open negotiations on a charter that would elevate bilateral ties to the level of Strategic Partnership” and that the State Department had approved a request to open a Moldovan consulate in Chicago, IL.<sup>114</sup>

U.S. assistance to Moldova rose substantially after Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine. From 2022 to September 2024, the United States announced new assistance commitments to Moldova of nearly \$950 million, an amount equivalent to more than half the total assistance the United States had provided to Moldova over the prior three decades.<sup>115</sup> U.S. assistance since 2022 included Foreign Military Financing, as well as assistance in support of energy diversification, economic development, governance and rule-of-law reform, border security and law enforcement, and cybersecurity, among other sectors. In April 2024, the State Department said the United States had become “the largest single-country donor to Moldova.”<sup>116</sup>

It is unclear how much of the announced assistance to Moldova since FY2022 has been affected by the second Trump Administration’s termination of many U.S. foreign aid awards following the foreign assistance review announced in Executive Order 14169 of January 20, 2025, subsequent program terminations, and rescinded FY2025 funding.<sup>117</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State’s foreign assistance website, at least \$623 million in assistance to Moldova was obligated (i.e., committed for awards) between FY2022 and FY2025.<sup>118</sup> One cross-border energy project,

<sup>111</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement on U.S.-Moldova Strategic Dialogue,” April 25, 2024.

<sup>112</sup> The U.S. government launched a prior strategic dialogue with Moldova in 2014, after Russia’s initial invasion of Ukraine. U.S. Department of State, “Daily Press Briefing,” March 4, 2014; U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement on U.S.-Moldova Strategic Dialogue,” March 23, 2023; and U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement on U.S.-Moldova Strategic Dialogue,” April 25, 2024.

<sup>113</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Presidential Elections in Moldova,” November 4, 2024.

<sup>114</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Acting Under Secretary Bass’ Meeting with Moldovan Foreign Minister Popsoi,” December 4, 2024; and *Infotag*, “Moldovan Consulate General to Open in Chicago in 2025,” December 5, 2024.

<sup>115</sup> Before 2022, the United States had provided more than \$1.7 billion in assistance since Moldova’s independence in 1991, according to the U.S. Department of State. This amount included a five-year, \$262 million grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation for agriculture and infrastructure from 2010 to 2015. U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Relations with Moldova,” August 27, 2021; Millennium Challenge Corporation, “Moldova Compact,” <https://www.mcc.gov/where-we-work/program/moldova-compact/>; and U.S. Embassy in Moldova, “United States Announces Substantial Additional Assistance for Moldova,” September 17, 2024.

<sup>116</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement on U.S.-Moldova Strategic Dialogue,” April 25, 2024. Also see U.S. Congress, House Foreign Affairs Committee, Europe Subcommittee, *A Look at U.S. Policy in Georgia and Moldova Ahead of Their 2024 Elections*, 118<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., July 23, 2024, H. Hrg. 118-108 (Washington: GPO, 2024), pp. 56-570.

<sup>117</sup> Executive Order 14169 of January 20, 2025, “Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid,” 90 *Federal Register* 8619, January 30, 2025; and P.L. 119-28 (Recissions Act of 2025).

<sup>118</sup> Total obligated funds are net of \$74 million in de-obligations from FY2022 to FY2025 (including \$63 million in (continued...))

an electricity transmission line between Strășeni (Moldova) and Gutinaș (Romania), was to begin construction by the end of 2025 pursuant to a 2024 memorandum of understanding between Moldova and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).<sup>119</sup> Moldovan authorities reportedly have discussed the status of U.S.-funded energy assistance with Trump Administration officials.<sup>120</sup> In May 2025, the Moldovan government and the International Organization for Migration indicated that some Department of State-funded border security and law enforcement assistance programs were proceeding.<sup>121</sup>

In 2023, U.S. Army forces held a joint training exercise, Rapid Trident 2023, in Moldova with Moldovan and Romanian armed forces. Moldova has a state partnership with the North Carolina National Guard, which participated in Rapid Trident 2023.<sup>122</sup>

U.S.-Moldova bilateral trade is relatively small, comprising less than 2% of Moldova's total trade. In 2024, Moldova imported from the United States about \$135 million worth of goods, mainly motor vehicles, medical instruments and appliances, machinery, and medicines. The United States imported from Moldova about \$136 million of goods, mainly wine, juice, and apparel.<sup>123</sup> In April 2024, Moldova imported from Greece a "test volume" of U.S.-origin liquefied natural gas (LNG).<sup>124</sup> On July 31, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order indicating that the United States would impose a 25% tariff on Moldovan imports as of August 7, 2025.<sup>125</sup>

The Biden Administration imposed sanctions on some Moldovan politicians, including Vladimir Plahotniuc and Ilan Shor, for alleged corruption and subversion of democracy.<sup>126</sup> In September 2024, the State Department announced sanctions on Russian and Moldovan individuals and

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FY2025 de-obligations). Of that, \$58 million in de-obligations were related to an energy security assistance project and \$4 million were related to a private sector competitiveness project. Data available from ForeignAssistance.gov, last updated August 22, 2025 (including partial Department of State data through the second quarter of FY2025 and U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID] data through the third quarter of FY2025).

<sup>119</sup> Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova, "The Ministry of Energy and USAID Signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Financing of the 400KV Strășeni-Gutinaș, the Third Interconnection Line with Romania," April 30, 2024. Also see USAID, "Deputy Administrator Isobel Coleman Signs a New Agreement with the Government of Moldova to Strengthen Its Energy Sector," April 30, 2024.

<sup>120</sup> Radio Moldova, "USAID Funding Suspension Hits the Republic of Moldova's Energy Sector: Four Projects in Jeopardy," February 28, 2025; and *Interfax*, "Moldova, U.S. in Talks on Continued Funding for Several USAID Projects—Sandu," March 3, 2025.

<sup>121</sup> Moldpres, "Moldova Received New Assistance Package from USA for Modernization of BPDS," May 8, 2025; and International Organization for Migration, "New US-funded Project Launched to Prevent Irregular Migration and Combat Cross-border Crime in the Republic of Moldova," May 15, 2025.

<sup>122</sup> U.S. Army Europe and Africa, "U.S., Romanian and Moldovan Forces Conduct Exercise Rapid Trident in Moldova," September 12, 2023; National Guard, "North Carolina Guard Joins Exercise Rapid Trident in Moldova," September 21, 2023; and Maj. Catalina Carrasco, "Infantry and Artillery Come Together for Multinational Exercise in Moldova," U.S. Army, September 27, 2023.

<sup>123</sup> UN Comtrade and U.S. Census Bureau, as reported in Trade Data Monitor.

<sup>124</sup> Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova, "SA Energocom to Import a Test Volume of LNG Gas from the USA," April 1, 2024; and Infotag, "United States Congratulates Government on First Purchase of Liquefied Natural Gas from the U.S.," April 3, 2024.

<sup>125</sup> White House, "Further Modifying the Reciprocal Tariff Rates," July 31, 2025.

<sup>126</sup> Vladimir Plahotniuc is subject to sanctions under Executive Order 13818 of December 20, 2017, "Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption," 82 *Federal Register* 60839. Other Moldova-related sanctions have been imposed under Executive Order 14024 of April 15, 2021, "Blocking Property With Respect To Specified Harmful Foreign Activities of the Government of the Russian Federation," 86 *Federal Register* 20249. Also see U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Targets Corruption and the Kremlin's Malign Influence Operations in Moldova," October 26, 2022; U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions Russian Intelligence-Linked Malign Influence Actors Targeting Moldova," June 5, 2023; and U.S. Department of State, "Taking Additional Measures to Degrade Russia's Wartime Economy," June 12, 2024.

entities, including Rossiya Segodnya (the parent company of Russian state-funded global media platform RT), for alleged interference related to Moldova’s 2024 presidential election and constitutional referendum (see “Russian Influence in Moldova”).<sup>127</sup>

## Issues for Congress

Some Members of Congress have expressed support for the United States’ relationship with Moldova and for strengthening Moldova’s stability and security in the Black Sea region, including by bolstering Moldova’s defenses against Russian hybrid threats. During the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House agreed in April 2022 to H.Res. 833 (by a vote of 409-17) and the Senate agreed in July 2022 to S.Res. 638 (by voice vote), expressing support for Moldova’s sovereignty and security and for the strengthening of U.S.-Moldova relations. During the 118<sup>th</sup> and 119<sup>th</sup> Congresses, some Members have engaged in the bilateral U.S.-Moldova relationship through congressional delegations, participation in the U.S. Congressional Moldova Caucus, assessment and oversight of related U.S. policy, and the introduction of related legislation.<sup>128</sup> In December 2024, at the end of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, bipartisan leaders of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe and the Congressional Moldova Caucus stated that a U.S.-Moldova “Strategic Partnership will demonstrate our comprehensive, bilateral partnership and the shared values of the Moldovan and American people.”<sup>129</sup>

Related congressional action may include consideration of measures intended to boost Moldova’s political and economic resilience, including in coordination with Romania and other Black Sea countries (e.g., in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, S.Res. 199; in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, S. 804/H.R. 1680), and U.S. defense cooperation with Moldova (e.g., in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, H.R. 5174).

In the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, some Members of Congress may have an interest in assessing and conducting oversight of U.S. policy and considering legislation regarding the following:

- Moldova’s capacity to counter Russian efforts to interfere in Moldova’s September 2025 parliamentary election, as well as the implications of the election’s outcome for U.S. regional priorities and interests and for Moldova-EU relations;
- the status and impact of, and future prospects for, U.S. initiatives to bolster Moldova’s resilience against Russian hybrid threats and strengthen economic development and governance in Moldova;
- the development of Moldova’s armed forces, including the role of U.S. and European security assistance and cooperation programs;
- Moldova’s energy security, including its transition away from reliance on Russian energy supplies, and the status of related U.S. and European assistance;
- Moldova’s progress toward EU membership and relations with NATO;

<sup>127</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Alerting the World to RT’s Global Covert Activities,” September 13, 2024.

<sup>128</sup> See, for example, Presidency of the Republic of Moldova, “U.S. Congressional Delegation Received at Presidency,” April 14, 2025; U.S. Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Europe and Regional Security Cooperation Subcommittee, *Assessing the Department of State’s Strategy for Security in the Black Sea Region*, 118<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., October 25, 2023, S. Hrg. 118-254 (Washington: GPO, 2024), pp. 51-321; and U.S. Congress, *A Look at U.S. Policy in Georgia and Moldova Ahead of Their 2024 Elections* (footnote 116).

<sup>129</sup> Congressman Bill Keating, “Keating, Kean, Ross, Lawler Statement on the Opening of Strategic Partnership Negotiations Between the United States and Moldova,” December 10, 2024.

- sanctions and other policies intended to address alleged corruption and democratic subversion in Moldova; and
- the potential effect of tariffs on U.S.-Moldova trade and diplomatic relations.

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