

**Transnistrian issue in context of future agreements
between USA and RF**
ARVAK Center comment, 29.03.2025¹

We would venture to assume that the U.S.-Russian negotiations will last somewhat longer than the deadlines announced by Washington at the beginning of the process. This is due to the fact that despite the statements of the parties, their agenda cannot be limited exclusively to the Ukrainian problems. The range of issues raised is much wider, and Ukraine is one of the episodes in the global game initiated by the United States and the Russian Federation with the aim of finding a mutually acceptable geopolitical configuration in areas where their interests overlap. In this regard, the fate of Kyiv depends on many factors that the parties take into account, and in connection with which they, in theory, exchange their vision. We are talking about zones of interest where antagonistic approaches by Washington and Moscow have been previously observed, leading, at least, to proxy confrontations. These include Syria, Iran, the South Caucasus, and Transnistria. The lack of consensus between the United States and the Russian Federation on all of the listed problem cases will directly affect the situation around Ukraine.

Thus, the negotiation agenda is complex, often referred to in the media as the “*big bargain*”. And in this light, the issue of Transnistria (PMR), which is geographically adjacent to Ukraine and has strategic importance in the context of Russia–Ukraine and Russia–West relations, is of particular interest. At the moment, Transnistria is not mentioned in the press releases about the U.S.-Russian negotiations, but this does not mean anything.

Firstly, official information regarding the agenda of the negotiations is already extremely scarce, or rather, filtered.

Secondly, the fate of Transnistria cannot but be included in the agenda of negotiations, given the presence of a Russian military group in the unrecognized republic, whose mandate will be questioned in the future, especially given the planned deployment of Western “*peacekeeping contingents*” on Ukrainian territory. The high probability of such a scenario practically excludes the possibility of the parties allowing foreign military groups to be in each other’s rear.

Thirdly, the Transnistrian problem is a part of the Moldavian issue, the resolution of which, according to many experts, is also directly related to the outcome of the conflict around Ukraine. We are talking about the future of Moldova, which faces the choice of either becoming part of the EU as an independent entity, or integrating into Europe by joining Romania, or maintaining a neutral status and entity. With any of these options, Chisinau must take into account the problem of the breakaway Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, which it considers an integral part of Moldova, as well as the Gagauz autonomy, the Turkic-speaking population of which is ambivalent about the issue of a common future with the Moldovans and, especially, the Romanians.

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 27.03.2025.

Thus, the importance of the Transnistrian and Moldovan issues is due to their connection with the Ukrainian settlement, the successful outcome of which, in turn, should bring U.S.-Russian relations to a qualitatively new, unattainable level since the founding of NATO.

At the same time, it should be understood that the *status quo* established in the early 1990s on the Transnistrian issue can not be prolonged. This will be nonsense, taking into account the fact that the United States, in the context of agreements with the Russian Federation, is already pushing in Kyiv the issue of changing the Ukrainian borders with the recognition of the territories occupied by Moscow since 2014. If we assume that the Russian Federation, with the full support of the United States, will achieve international (at least partial) legitimization of the annexation of the former Ukrainian territories, then in this case its “Transnistrian asset”, perhaps, among other concessions, should become the price for the consent of Romania and the EU as a whole to the new realities around Ukraine. Otherwise, this “*asset*” will turn into a big burden for Moscow, which, in fact, it already is now, taking into account the problematic supply of energy resources to Tiraspol and the difficulties in supporting the Russian military in Transnistria, which are essentially isolated from the “mainland”. For their part, Moldova and Romania are very interested in the quick and bloodless reintegration of Transnistria, which will give Chisinau the opportunity to join the EU in one format or another, as well as automatically stop the separatist tendencies in Gagauzia, behind which, according to experts, Turkey stands. In this context, it is hardly a coincidence that it was during the period of intense American-Russian negotiations that the Moldovan authorities detained the *bashkan* (leader) of the Gagauz autonomy, Evgenia Gutsul, at the Chisinau airport, who, by the way, was planning another trip to Turkey. The precedent for the political neutralization of the Gagauz leader leads to the conclusion that Chisinau is preemptively beginning the process of tightening measures in the fight against “*Gagauz separatism*” simultaneously using the energy and economic crisis that has developed in the PMR to increase the pressure on Tiraspol.

In Moldova, trends towards the beginning of the process of centralization of the country are clearly emerging. It is obvious that these events directly resonate, on the one hand, with the launch of U.S.-Russian negotiations on Ukraine, and on the other hand, with the crisis internal political situation in Romania, where the potential winner in the presidential elections scheduled for the second time in May 2025 – Calin Georgescu, who is emphatically moderate regarding the prospects of Moldova joining Romania – was deprived of the right to participate in the presidential race by the Constitutional Court in Bucharest.

Meanwhile, the style of Russian political and informational support for the situation in Moldova and around Transnistria suggests that Moscow is apparently already preparing to curtail political, financial, economic and military support for Tiraspol, without interfering with the intensification of Chisinau’s reintegration efforts. This course of the Russian Federation is hardly possible without coordinating its positions with the United States.

From a moral point of view, the only thing the Kremlin can console itself with if the scenario of abandoning Tiraspol is implemented is that Moldova is unlikely to resort to the

practice of ethnic cleansing and violence in the PMR. In the 1990s, the process of separation of Transnistria from Moldova was not accompanied by “much bloodshed”, and the conflict also did not have a bloody continuation decades later, as happened, for example, in South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. On the contrary, Moldova and the PMR retained many attributes of cooperation and compromise solutions that did not allow the situation to slide into interethnic hatred and xenophobia. Taking this into account, it may be much easier for the Russian Federation to withdraw its troops from the unrecognized republic, thereby converting the “burden” into an “active”, required in the “big bargain” with the USA.