

Learning Activity

The Impact of the War on the Dniester on the Republic of Moldova

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Age	15-16 years
Time	45 min
Key question	What are the consequences of the War on Dniester for the Republic of Moldova?

This learning activity approaches the various consequences of the War on the Dniester (1992), or the Transnistria War, on the Republic of Moldova since 1992. Students will discover that the war had a major impact on the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the country, and still influences these areas today, on both sides of the Dniester. The pedagogical approach includes working with written historical sources, images, the official positions of international organisations, and historical witnesses. It is also based on a national curricular vision to consolidate the historical past and teach democratic values.

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Explain the impact of the War on the Dniester on the Republic of Moldova.
- Evaluate the political, economic, cultural, and social influence of the war on the development of the Republic of Moldova.
- Develop critical skills in recognising and combating disinformation and misinterpretation of the war and other historical events.
- Interpret the consequences of the war on society.

Pedagogical recommendations

This learning activity is designed on the principle that basic knowledge about the War on the Dniester, including its chronology, causes, the different sides and key personalities involved, has been already assimilated. Thus, the lesson focuses on the consequences of the war, rather than its causes. The approach is designed to illustrate the impact of the war in the short and long term on the politics, economy, society, and culture of the Republic of Moldova, including Transnistria. The perspective of the lesson activity is a national one, but it can also be interpreted from a local point of view, especially in regions close to military operations or directly affected by the war.

In this situation, teachers can take a reflexive approach: it is important to consider the relevance and the traumatic aspect of the event for the individual students in the class. If possible, it is recommended to expand and elaborate the range of problems caused by the war, also in a local context. Finally, and if time allows, teachers are encouraged to approach the culture of memory surrounding the war in different areas of society, e.g. civilians, soldiers, children, refugees, and different professional groups.

Activities

Stage I

Introduction to the topic

5 minutes

The teacher shows a map showing the current territorial division of Moldova. The students, together with the teacher, create a brief timeline in which they mark 3-4 major turning points which influenced the formation of such a division between 1989 and 1994.



Stage II

Source work in groups

25 minutes

Students are split into 3 groups, and each is given a set of source materials to read and analyse (see Appendix I). Groups work simultaneously on their task for 10 minutes, working on the questions below, and then each group has 5 minutes to summarise the sources and to present their work to the others.

Group 1

Political impact

1. In a table, write down the Moldovan and Transnistrian positions presented by the sources about the war.
2. Evaluate the political impact of the war for the Republic of Moldova. Write your answer.

Group 2

Economic impact

- 1 Analyse the sources attentively and mark the information as proposed below:

√	information that confirms your knowledge
-	information that contradicts/is different from your knowledge
+	information that is new to you
?	information that is unclear and needs to be elucidated
- 2 Determine the impact of the War on the Dniester on the economy of both sides involved. Write your answers.

Group 3

Cultural impact

- 1 What issues of national identity caused (or escalated) the war?
- 2 What aspects of everyday life are influenced by the issue of script (Latin or Cyrillic) in this region?
- 3 In your opinion, how important is it to have access to education in the native language of a certain group? How far does education shape the identity of a person?
- 4 According to the sources, what are the most important problems that Romanian speaking schools are facing in Transnistria? How can they be solved?

Stage III

Brainstorm

10 minutes

The class works together under the guidance of the teacher, who draws 3 circles on the board with the following titles: “Political consequences”, “Economic consequences” and “Cultural consequences”.

Using their knowledge and the information learned during the lesson, students should formulate short hashtags to explain the consequences of the war in the 3 areas. The teacher writes them in the corresponding circles.

Stage IV

Recommended homework activity

5 minutes

Students are asked to interview a member of their family about the War on the Dniester. The teacher can offer some guiding questions (see Appendix II) and students can ask for clarifications/additional information depending on the answers they get. Through the activity, students should investigate the perception of the war by different social, professional, and age groups. Students can interview other

people they know to be connected with the event. The questions can be adapted to the familial/local context. This activity will ensure that students reflect upon the wider topic outside of the classroom.

Assessment

During Stage II, the students are given questions and tasks. In answering the questions and fulfilling the tasks, students will use different methods of learning that are focusing on reasoning, critical thinking and evaluation of the sources.

The homework is set in a form that enables students to evaluate different perspectives on the same events and to present them using a multiperspective approach.

Glossary

1992 Ceasefire Agreement – a document signed by the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation that stipulated a ceasefire and marked the end of the military conflict.

Left side of the Dniester – a colloquial way to refer to Transnistria, which lies on the left bank of the river Dniester (in the north-south direction of the river's flow).

Planned economy – an economic system in which the state manages the economy and makes all decisions regarding the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

Promo-LEX – a non-governmental organisation that aims to advance democracy in the Republic of Moldova, including in Transnistria, by promoting and defending human rights, monitoring democratic processes, and strengthening civil society. Promo-LEX, established in 2002, is a not-for-profit and politically independent organisation that operates throughout the country.

Separatism – a movement to create an independent state or an autonomous region.

Source packs

Group 1 Political impact

Source A

Mircea Snegur, President of the Republic of Moldova from 1990-96, on the country's position towards the war

Source: Noi.md (2015) 'Mircea Snegur: Conflictul de pe Nistru a fost provocat de separatiști cu sprijinul Rusiei' [Mircea Snegur: The conflict on the Dniester was provoked by separatists with the support of Russia], 3 March, https://noi.md/md/news_id/57156, accessed 4 October 2023.

“Those who consciously started this conflict did not want international recognition of the Republic of Moldova, they did not want Moldova to join the UN. We did not want this war. On the contrary, we made enormous efforts to resolve differences and misunderstandings peacefully. God and history are our witnesses. Unfortunately, they did not hear us, did not understand us, and chose war. We could not be mere observers of the crimes of local bandits and those who came from Russia.”

Source B

Extract from the 1992 Ceasefire Agreement¹

“2.2 Each side taking part in the work of the Committee² shall appoint its representatives to it. The Control Committee shall be based in the city of Bender.

2.3 In order to carry out the aforementioned measures, the Control Committee shall have under its authority military contingents which shall be formed on a voluntary basis and shall represent the sides taking part in the implementation of this Agreement. The deployment of these contingents and their use in guaranteeing the cease-fire and security in the zone of conflict shall be in accordance with the decisions of the Control Committee, which shall be taken on the basis of consensus. The numerical strength and status of the military contingents, and the conditions for their deployment in the zone of conflict and their withdrawal from it, shall be established in a separate protocol.”

¹ The signing of the cease-fire agreement on 21 July 1992 took place in the context of the massive involvement of the 14th Army of the Russian Federation with heavy weapons during the War on the Dniester.

² According to Article 2.1, the joint Control Committee consists of representatives from the three sides taking part in the settlement: the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine.

Source: United Nations Security Council (1992) 'Agreement on the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniester Region of the Republic of Moldova', 21 August, https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MD%20RU_920000_AgreementPrinciplesPeacefulSettlementDniesterConflict.pdf, accessed 28 November 2023.

Source C

The stated position of Leonid Manakov, Transnistrian political representative in The Russian Federation, 2022

Source: Newsmaker (2022) 'Leonid Manakov accused Moldova at the UN of violating human rights in Transnistria', 6 October, <https://newsmaker.md/ro/leonid-manakov-a-acuzat-moldova-la-onu-de-incalcarearea-drepturilor-omului-in-transnistria/>, accessed 4 October 2023.

"I call on the international community to make efforts to prevent human rights violations by the Moldovan authorities in Transnistria. We request the Human Rights Council to make an adequate assessment of this destructive approach taken by Moldova and to contribute to the strict observance by Chisinau of all the agreements previously signed with Transnistria."

Source D

A Transnistrian history textbook on the War on the Dniester

Source: Бабилунга Н. В. & Бомешко Б. Г. (2005). *История родного края: Учебник для общеобразовательных учебных заведений. 8-9 кл.* [A history of the native land: Textbook for general education institutions, grades 8-9], Тирасполь: РИО ГИПК, p.283.

"The Romanians, confident in their own forces, began preparations for the union of Moldova with Romania. Under their pressure, on 23 June 1990, the Parliament approved the Declaration of Sovereignty, which proclaimed the illegitimate nature of the act of 2 August 1940 regarding the creation of the Moldovan SSR, which, apparently, was a consequence of the "Soviet occupation" of the Romanian territories of Bessarabia and North Bukovina. By issuing this Declaration, the republic liquidated the form in which it had existed for 50 years. Transnistria obtained the absolutely legitimate right to self-determination, since it was no longer part of the Moldovan SSR."

Group 2 Economic impact

Source A

Considerations on the function of the economy in the Moldovan SSR and Transnistria

Source: Nistor, E. (2017) 'Războiul de pe Nistru: cauze, actori, consecințe' [The Dniester War: Causes, Actors, Consequences], *Geopolitics, History and Population in Eastern Europe*, 10(1), pp.101-111, https://studium.ugal.ro/ARTICOLE_STUDIUM/ARTICOLE%20STUDIUM%2010-S1/1010%20-%20S1%20-%20NISTOR.pdf, accessed 4 October 2023.

“History teaches us that we learn nothing from history.’ This paradox, formulated by the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, sometimes comes to mind when I think about the past and present problems of Moldova and the political responsibility of its leaders. The end of the 1980s was a turning point for all Eastern European states. All political, economic, and military life in the Moldovan SSR and Transnistria was controlled to the maximum by Moscow, listening only to the directives received from the Moscow central bodies; this economic model today is called a directed/planned economy.”

Source B

Statistics on the economic impact of the war on both sides of the Dniester.

Source: Platzforma, (2017) '25 de ani de la Războiul de pe Nistru: greșelile Chișinăului de la începutul conflictului transnistrian' [25 years since the War on the Dniester: Chisinau's mistakes since the beginning of the Transnistrian conflict], 6 March, <https://platzforma.md/arhive/36287>, accessed 4 October 2023.

“The armed conflict led to a deterioration of the economic situation on both banks of the Dniester, and contributed to the deepening of the economic crisis which had begun in 1990. The total gross domestic product (produced on both banks of the Dniester) in 1992 decreased by 29% (in 1991 by 17%; in 1993 by 1%). The total volume of industrial production decreased by 27% (in 1991 by 11%; in 1993, no reductions were recorded); the volume of transported goods decreased by 51%.

The activity of many enterprises in the Transnistrian region was paralysed due to the destruction and general economic destabilisation in the conflict zone, especially in the cities of Bender and Dubăsari.

According to data from the Transnistrian side, a total of 218 industrial, transport, and construction enterprises were destroyed or damaged (including 46 enterprises in Bender), 8 km of cable and 35 km of overhead power lines were damaged, 15 km of thermal networks, and 10 electrical stations. In Bender, the production of cables was significantly reduced.

Gas and electricity supplies were interrupted on both banks of the Dniester. The 330-kw and 110-kw electricity transmission lines were disconnected, through which electricity was supplied from the left to the right side of the Dniester.”

Source C

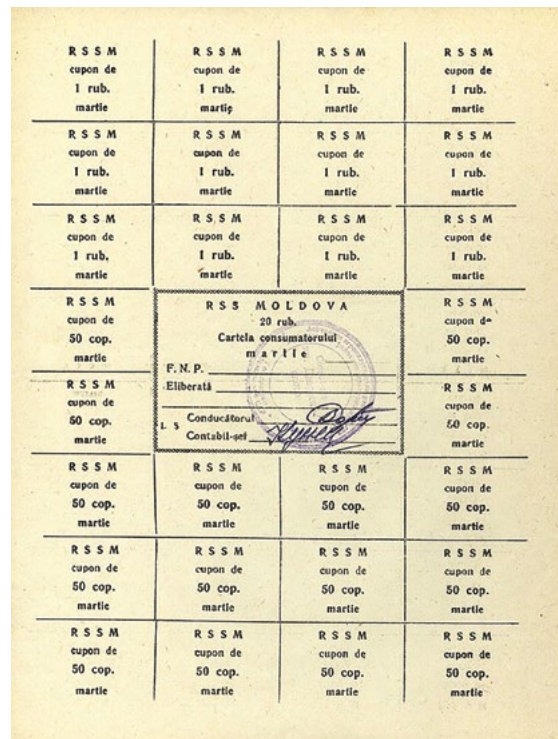
Introduction of Moldovan national currency (Moldovan leu)

Source: Gorelova, E. & Şelari, G. (2009) *Costurile conflictului transnistrean și beneficiile soluționării lui* [The costs of the Transnistrian conflict and the benefits of its resolution]. Chisinau: CISR, <https://www.cisr-md.org/pdf/Report%20ROM%20Master%20Draft%20vEG.pdf>, accessed 4 October 2023.

“Due to the difficult situation, on 10 June 1992, amid the fighting on the Dniester, coupons were put into circulation. Although the coupons were planned as a temporary measure, they lasted a year and a half almost until the end of 1993, when the Moldovan leu finally debuted. And all this time, along with the coupons, it was also possible to pay in Rubles!”

Source D

Examples of Moldovan temporary coupons



Source: Noi.md (2021) 'Această zi în istorie: La 10 iunie 1992 au apărut cupoanele moldovenești' [This day in history: On June 10, 1992, Moldovan coupons appeared], 10 June, <https://noi.md/md/economie/aceasta-zi-in-istorie-la-10-iunie-1992-au-apatut-cupoanele-moldovenești>, accessed 4 October 2023.

Source E

Moldovan leu

On 29 November 1993, the national currency - the Moldovan leu - was introduced in the Republic of Moldova. File:MD 1 leu av.jpg, Wikimedia Commons, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MD_1_leu_av.jpg, accessed 5 December 2023.



Group 3 Cultural impact

Source A

Historian Charles King on issues of language and identity in Transnistria

“The conflict in Transnistria has often been described, both in Russia and the West, as an ethnic war between nationalists from Chisinau, determined to unite with Romania, and ethnic Russians from Transnistria who feared being assimilated into an extended Romanian state. The issue that attracted the most attention was the proposal to adopt the Moldovan language as the official language of the republic and switch to the Latin alphabet. In Transnistria, loyalty to the Soviet system was strongest, and it was also here that language reforms threatened to have the greatest impact.

Although the uprising in Transnistria was generally presented as a Slavic uprising against Chisinau's nationalist policies, the real source of the post-1990 violence was at the level of the political elites. The Supreme Soviet of the SSR, gaining courage after the vote in favour of language reform, continued cultural and political reforms. The Transnistrians, considering each of these moves to be Moldova's intention to leave the USSR and unite with Romania, also continued their preparations for secession.”

Source: King, C. (2002) *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia and the Policy of Culture*. Chişinău, Republic of Moldova: Arc Publishing House, pp.190-1.

Source B

Statement by the NGO Promo-LEX on the problems of national Moldavian schools in the Transnistrian region.

¹ ‘Solemn squares’ refers to festive displays at the beginning and end of the school year. Children, teachers and parents stand in square formation and sing the Moldovan national anthem and raise the national flag. These activities are prohibited in Transnistria, and for that reason, the ‘solemn squares’ are supervised by the Transnistrian authorities. The Transnistrian authorities also typically cut off the electricity during the events.

Source: IPN (2021) ‘Scolile româneşti din stânga Nistrului se confruntă cu numeroase presiuni, Promo-LEX’ [Romanian schools on the left side of the Dniester are facing numerous pressures, Promo-LEX], 1 September, https://www.ipn.md/ro/scolile-romanesti-din-stanga-nistrului-se-confrunta-cu-numeroase-7967_1084103.html, accessed 4 October 2023.

“The Promo-LEX association notes that, for over three decades, the eight educational institutions with Romanian language teaching in the Transnistrian region have been facing numerous pressures and intimidation from the de facto administration in Tiraspol. The association referred specifically to the lack of a headquarters of their own, and the fact that those they have now are poorly adapted to the educational process; to subpoenas and the risk of enlistment in the so-called Transnistrian army; and challenges in ensuring the free movement of people and goods.

In the Roghi and Corjova secondary schools, the solemn squares¹ are supervised by the local militia. Students and teachers are prohibited from singing the national anthem of the Republic of Moldova and hoisting the state flag. The “Ştefan cel Mare” High School has no headquarters, and students have to travel tens of kilometres every day to get to school.

The Promo-Lex Association noted that the problems and intimidation faced by schools would disappear by themselves if the Russian Federation were to implement the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights regarding violations of the right to education in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. The Court decided that the Russian Federation is responsible for the violation of human rights in the Transnistrian region, in this case, the right to education, but until now the Russian Federation refuses to implement those judgments.”

Homework activity worksheet

Question	Answer
How old were you at the time of the War on the Dniester? What was your occupation?	
How did you find out about the war? How did you feel?	
How was it commented on in your community? How was your community affected by the War? Do you know about any contributions of your community to the War?	
Does it affect you today? What do you think about it today? Have your community or family suffered any losses or lost someone in the war?	