FROZEN CONFLICTS IN THE POST SOVIET SPACE

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The post soviet space is home for 4 of the most well known conflicts assumed to be frozen. This characteristic came from the fact that no solution is on the table for these conflicts but, nobody fights now on the ground. The apparent stability of those conflicts is obtained by the presence of so-called peacekeeper troops (never assumed as such by any international organization, nor by the CIS, nor by the host countries that have inherited those troops from the old Soviet Union as Russian troops) but can be heatened at every moment (see the Transnistrian case with the rail crisis, the school crisis). Those conflicts are not solved because there is no interest for this, on the contrary, it is a great deal in keeping these separate territories under a tight Russian control for advantages obtained in the region (more and more arguable for the time being). The 4 frozen conflicts are Transnistria, Abhazia, South Osetia and Nagorno-Karabah.

I. Transnistria – the conflict in short, what keeps it alive, long term consequences

Transnistria is a special conflict in any way. It is not an ethnic one – there are more Russians and more Ukrainians in Chisinau than in the region, leaving without any discrimination in the Republic of Moldova – there are no direct conflicts between the population – trade and bilateral grassroots relations are on the run and where in place even in the time of the armed conflict – and if you put Tiraspol down, the population has the same rate of ethnical representation than in the rest of the country (80% Romanian/Moldavian, 12 Ukrainians, 10 Russian), despite the refugees – 250.000 disappeared from the region between the two census, 1989 and 2004, as willing migrants, internal displaced persons, forced migrants – and the huge immigration of foreigners (50-60.000 people) specially in Tiraspol – from the whole territory of Russia, specially the extreme orient, Siberia and The Ural region.

The Transnistrian war is hard to be defined as a conflict since the left bank fight against the reunion of Republic of Moldova to Romania and the right bank fight for the integrity of the country, two uncontradictory goals. The war was a result of the propaganda of the last days of the Soviet Union, propaganda in a region dominated by the military-industrial complex – 12 factories – and the residence of a lot of
veterans from the World War II. The most illustrative in this is that transnistrian were supporting all movements to rebuilt the Great Soviet State, as Ghenadi Ianaev in Moscow putch against Gorbachev, in august 1991, were supporting Aleksandr Rutskoi and Ruslan Hazbulatov in september 1993 in the rebellion against Eltin’s reforms and that they contributed to support all movements of separation especially in Abhazia and South Osetia.

Transnistria is the proud place where Guiness books could make a fortune since in is the place with the highest inflation in the world – 2 milion% a year, in 1995- the lowest income – 3-4 dolars per month medium and 1,50 USD the minimum salary, in 1994-1996 - 250.000 people disapeared in 15 year time, meaning 35% of the population at that time (half of the present day population), unemployment at 60% in our days (more that the record of Kosovo in war time) the highest groth of a fortune of a political leader – Igor Smirnov owns, in 15 years, 150 million USD, a rate of gain of more than 50.000 dollars a day – factories privatized at 10% their value and debts to gaz and energy supplies to Russia growing evry year from the translation of the private companies debts to the population account. This offers an explanaition to the stand still of the conflict.

It is easier to define the conflict as one between Republic of Moldova and Russia since in the war the armies of those two states fight one against the other, and in the separatist side we had the paramilitary troops gathered by the leaders insalled in the region, all having Russian Passport and visiting Transnistria in 1990-1991 for the first time – specially after the OMON storming against the parliaments in Riga and Vilnius(some Transnistrian leaders are demanded for trial in Baltic states). But since it is not diplomatic and it doesn’t solve anything, it is not worth rising such an issue. We are talking today about “the transnistrian issue” and not conflict.

**Russian Troops**

Since the last days of the former Soviet Union and since the retreat of Russian Red Army from Germany and Cechoslovakia, in the region were a large number of Russian Troops, first as the Army of south Western flank of the Soviet Union – design to port a hard attack in the direction of Greece, Turkey and Italy, according to the Warsow Pact provisions – and after the 14-th Russian Army – Through a decree issued by Boris Eltsin in 1992, when in a single day the former Army of the CIS (meaning all former Soviet countries) shifted its subordination from Marechall Shaposhnikov – supreme comander of the CIS Army- to Pavel Grachev, Russian Minister of Defense, so becoming a Russian army. So Republic of Moldova get the Russian tropps without any title on their territory through a decree of Boris Eltsin.
Negociation lasted for 19 rounds and did finished in 1994 with an agreement that sais the last date for the withdrawal of this army will be 1997.

Nothing moved and in 1999, in Istanbul annual document of the OSCE summit, Russia agreed by signing the final declaration, to withdraw its troops and stock piles of weapons and ammunition until 31 of December 2001. We are still there, but nowadays, OSCE final documents are not mentioning any more the country to observ commitments linked to the CFE Treaty. Now we have Russian tropps in different positions: as guards of the stock piles in Cobasna, as peace keepers (all around 3500 troops), peacekeapers (around 2500) and the other get pensions or moved through transfers in the Militia, Army and Security Services of the so-called Transnistrian Army (10-12.000). There were no soldiers leaving the region. Moreover, according to an agreement design “to let the trasnistrian leaders agree the retreat of half of the stock pile”, a great number of weapons and ammunition were freely and chargeless given to these troops under separatist controle.

**Weapons and ammunition**

In Transnistria, a big issue is the one of weapons and ammunition lasting in the stock piles since 1940. There where 40.000 tons of weapons and ammunition in Cobasna and in 2003 some half of it leaved the region, but no OSCE observer wasn’t allowed to see the trains loaded with weapons and to meet them at destination, so nobody knows what’s happened with these weapons. Now, in Cobasna there are less than 19,000 tons of weapons and ammunition (this could be out in 4-6 month). Separatists refused to accept a device to destroy and dismantle weapons that could not be carry in Russia, and the device is still in Chisinau.

A recent study shows that in the case of an accident, as the one happened near Kiev, in a stockpile, the result will be affecting 50 km around (because of the country environment and the presence of missiles that could be launched by the explosion at this distance). In terms of power, at this moment the explosion of Cobasna will be equivalent to Hiroshima bomb. Moreover, the issue that really concerns is the presence of radioactivity and radioactive Cesium, that proves ether the presence of Highly Enriched Uranium or Plutonium – ussualy used in Nuclear bolmbs – either residue of those materials, that could be used in designing dirty bombs.

In a recent meeting with representatives from the US lawyer association Grigori Maracutza, the head of the Parliament of the separatist republic asked for 5 billion
dollars to allow the Russian weapons and ammunition to leave. We are not sure that he’s Russian masters would agree to the deal.

Another concern are the factories that are producing weapons right in Transnistria, without any indication of number or place of production. We have at least two factories able to produce from light weapons like guns and automatic weapons to the missile portable launching machines GRAD. There is no control on those and allegation came that weapons designed here were used in former Yugoslavia wars, Iraq and Chechnia, in South Yemen, Congo and Eritrea. There are arguable reports talking about the fact that several intelligence services in the whole world used the weapons produced in Transnistria for helping different parts in wars when a weapon sails ban was in place.

**Trafficking and smuggling**

Another peace of interest in the region is trafficking and smuggling. Ukraine has elaborated a study on this and it seems that every year, the Ukrainian state loses 2 billion dollars in custom income from the smuggling between Odessa and Ilishiovsk and the separatist region. According to Dmitri Tkaci, the Ukrainian special envoy in the peace process for Transnistria, the police and custom authorities used to demand between 3-4 grivna a kilo for every transportation that was to go to Tiraspol, according the papers and is escorted in a designed place in Transnistria, with all goods.

On the other hand, estimated inputs of the Transnistrian leaders for smuggling with specially Chinese products that enter Moldova and the EU is about 2 billion USD, which means a trade of about 17-20 billion dollars each year. That’s how Transnistrian separatist leaders are paying their partners and supporters in Chisinau, Kiev and Moscow, but also got a lot of money for EU and US companies in trade with steel.

It has been proved that the former cheef of the National Security Council of the Ukrainian Presidency has interests in several factories in the region and that the actual negotiator for the Ukrainian side, Dmitri Tkaci, is the owner of the monopolist separatist provider of mobile telephony. That’s why the conflict is still unsolved.

**Peace process**
At this moment, the peace process is managed in a 5 plus two format beginning from the last month, after 13 years of functioning of a mechanism run by OSCE with Russia, Ukraine as mediators, and “the two parts” at equal position, the authorities in Chisinau and the separatists in Tiraspol. The mechanism is doubled by a Joint Commission of Control run by Russian “peace-keepers”. The result is that these forces became true border guards to keep the separatist regime alive.

The idea that makes this mechanism run was invented by Evgheni Primakov, former minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia who introduced the concept of “Common state”, so the pre-existence of two states that decided to joint together, equalising the status of the “two parts” and inaugurated the “negociated for the sake of negociations” for the last 8 years. It was succeeded by Dmitri Kozak, special envoyee of Russia, who proposed a federalisation plan where the Russian army was supposed to stay officially 20 years when Republic of Moldova would be fully demilitarized (not the separatist side) and the security, foreign affairs and defense would be cenzored by the separatists (Russian citizens).

The format of negotiation changes in to a 5 plus two observers, with EU and US as active observers. This offers a new framework, and the mechanism has on the table two plans, the Yushcenko plan – based on a round of democratic election and new negotiations with the new elected representatives - and the 22 July law of the Parliament of Republic of Moldova on the status of eastern districts of Moldova.

In spite of this situation, Russia tried to put back on the table a proposal with confidence building that will lead to the indefinite stay of its troops in Transnistria and full demilitarisation – bloking Republic of Moldova’s accession to NATO. The Nesterushkin plan came with a redrawing of the Kozak federalisation plan.

On the other hand, transnistrian separatist tries to support Russia’s plan by declaring that they will take the “Kosovo model” so that on the 30 of November to vote for full independence and get rid of negotiations and a “common state” conception. This will block indefinitely the peace process. On the other hand, Russia forced economic blockade to Republic of Moldova by interdiction of exports of food products, bloking the sails of fiscal stamps for the wine and rising the prices of gas. On the other hand, RAO AES, the Russian giant who did privatize illegally to the separatists the Cuciurgan power plant, situated in the separatist region, tried to rise energy prices and cut the power to the western part of Moldova.

EU and Transnistria
An important contribution to the resolution of the conflict has been brought by the EU. First through the **criteria of democratization** (that enforced the Council of Europe monitoring) second by the **border monitoring mission**, third by opening the **EU delegation** in Chisinau, third, by appointing a **special representative for the Transnistrian Conflict**, Mr. Jakobovitz de Szeged, fourth, through the elaboration and support of the **Action Plan** and the open **perspectives of europeanization** of the Republic of Moldova and fifth by reputing on the table the 2003 proposal of a **police training mission** and **border guards**, together with a **custom training mission** and monitoring of the **custom control** inside the territory.

**Long term consequences**

The **worse consequences** are the one related to the young generation in the separatist region. Here, the propaganda and the **“patriotic” teaching system** did funded a **new ideology** that is the basis of the future terrosits. In fact, a **new generation of terrorists** is in the way of being trained in Transnistria.

All begin with the problems of the security of Transnistria: Vadim Shevtsov-Antiufeev, the chief of the separatist security – former head of OMON storm against Latvian Parliament, in 1991 – elaborate the **strategy of security** of the “country”, including basically two threats: **blocking a possible coloured revolution** and second, preparing for the **case of a military solution** – when the separatist and Russian forces are recognize resisting no more than 2 hours. Dmitri Soin, Chief of the Department of protecting the Constitution of the Ministry of National Security in Transnistria, elaborate a project of registering and controlling **more than 600 NGO’s** in Transnistria in 3 month – for avoiding to have people not involved in such organisations and controlling the “civil society” for not allowing the formation of “western controled/founded NGO”.

Dmitri Soin himself runs some NGO’s, the most active and dangerous beeing **“Proriv”- Breakthrough**. From the recruitment, the teaching system and to the very goals, this organisation poved to be a very **toxic** one. This lead to the formation of a **paramilitary NGO’s** with **Che Guevarra camps** for training in shooting, making explosifs, visible actions and sabotage, terrorist actions, recommended as a solution if the “country” was to be occupied, specially on the right bank. The **ideology** and the **strategy of terrorism** used was also on the newspapers „Dniestrovskiy Kurier” (**11 martie 2004**) and first generation of graduates appeared in August. They are the **new generation of qualified terrorists**. Now, even if Russia decide to **withdraw**
the troops and its administration from Transnistria, these people are still in the ground.

Proriv also has three attacks, during the formation period: two storming against the OSCE mission in Tiraspol – storming against the building, burning the flag and change it with a Proriv flag, burning pupets representing Voronin and William Hill, president of Moldova and the head of the OSCE Mission in Moldova. Another time they made rally in front of the future miting and have through ink on the presidetn of the Helsinki Comitee in Moldova, Stefan Uritu that was going to a human rights reunion in Transnistria.

Moreover, this organisation begin to have branches in Crimea, in the so-call Ruthenian part of Transcarpathian region in Ukraine (that is employing nowadays separatism techniques), and they developped a full network of paramilitary organisation with the ukrainian radical Dmytro Korchynskij, leader of the paramilitary movement „Bratstvo”(Brothers), invited as lecturer and professor to these camps, and with the organization „Nashi”(Ours) from Russia. Those organizations are ready to support each other and to be involved specially in supporting separatist regimes like the one in Transnistria, Abhazia and North Ossetia.

Citizenship issue

In Transnistria – but also Abhazia and South Ossetia, another tool to fight against the legitimate central autorities was the citizenship policies. First, the separatist regime introduced the Transnistrian citizenship. This really helped in terms of protecting the population for getting Russian citizenship. At some point, those people – 550.000 inhabitans now – realised that for moving around – even in Chisinau, to the market, to sell the goods- they need a recognised citizenship. The first to offer facilities was Russia, who did issue some 80.000-100.000 citizenships. Realizing that they loose ground, Ukraine begin to issue citizenship to its “own minority”, and gets now some 50.000 to 60.000 citizens in Tranannistria.

But the most important behavior was towards the Moldovan citizenship. Despite the problems that they could get, taking advantage on the very smooth and easy way in getting back the Moldavian citizenship (if you were a citizen or was in the region at 27 of August 1991, independence day), more than half of population keept of gets back this citizenship 270.000 -300.000 people nowadays.
It is not the case in Abhazia or South Ossetia. In Abhazia, 84% of the current residents get Russian citizenship, 70% of the pensioners got pensions from Russia and both figures will reach **100% in 6 month-1 year**. The Russian citizenship policy was to offer Russian citizenship to “legitimate compatriots”- those who claim they are **ethnic Russians** or “**Russian speakers**”, and than to “**co-citizens**” of the previous ones.

**II. Conflicts in Georgia: Abhazia, North Ossetia**

The **basic difference** is that **Russia is a direct neighbor**. The difference in meaning is that **Russian troops and ammunition are low strategic assets** – different from the case of Transnistria. The **citizenship** is almost unanimously **offered to everybody** and different ways of convincing the **Georgian ethnic and citizens** to get rid of their citizenship begun with “**convincing method**”, going to **conscription** in Abhaz armed forces and finishing with **Abhazian law in double citizenship** – accepting only the Russian as a second citizenship to the own abhaz one.

In Abhazia, UN plays the role of OSCE in Transnistria and South Ossetia, offering **legitimacy** to the so-called **Russian peacekeepers** (without any mandate) and to the **JCC institutions** with “the two parts”, Russia and the international body. They **equalized** the separatist representatives with the legitimate authorities.

Georgia has put on the table several offers to solve the conflict. At some point, its representatives **were not allowed to speak** – Ljubliana meeting this month – by international representatives, that privileged “**Russian solution**”-independence or control of the decision making system of the whole country through the separatist region.

**Recommendations**

1. **Multinational peacekeeping operations**, transitional status, with Russia a part but no more that 30% of the troops, not under Russia control, not the troops envoloped in the conflict. Moving towards a **civilian peacekeeping mission**, mostly police.
2. **Westernize the format**: EU and NATO did become actors at the Black Sea and in the Widder Black Sea Region, those enclaves created direct threats to all member countries through soft security issues, they are legitimate to enter the format of negotiation.
3. **Rejecting negotiation with actual non-recognized leaders as legitimate ones**.
4. **Democratization** process, than **elections** (beginning with **local** ones and with **building strong local communities**) for a true counterpart for future negotiations. **European perspective** to all those countries.

5. **Containing the Kosovo precedent** and separating it from other post-soviet cases.

6. Stating the **irreversibility** of the borders and of the recognized countries. Rejecting **independence claims** for all those territories and defining the **basic standards** for the region before recognized elections (first local ones).

7. **Reinsertion process of central authorities** before the recognized elections.

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