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## Para-states as an instrument for strengthening Russia's position - the case of Transnistria

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## Introduction

A non-recognized state (interchangeable terms: Para-state, quasi-state) is a political entity possessing all the attributes of statehood (for example political system, armed forces, foreign policy), but it does not have international recognition of statehood status.<sup>1</sup> Formally, it is a part of another state. A non-recognized State is an entity where a separatist center of power controls the territory concerned on the path of armed conflict, but is not strong enough to force recognition of the territory's independence from the home State.<sup>2</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union implied the creation of many such entities within the post-Soviet area, e.g. the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), Abkhazia or the Pridnestrovian Republic of Moldova. Russia is often the patron of strengthening the statehood of para-states. The aim of the article is to analyze the use of cooperation with countries not recognized by the Russian Federation to strengthen its geopolitical position in competition with the West on the example of Russian influence in Transnistria.

The thesis of the article is as follows: Supporting separatist tendencies in Transnistria is one of the elements enabling Russia to maintain its position as a hegemon in the post-Soviet area, which affects its position in the global competition for power. In order to characterize this issue adequately, it is necessary to answer the following research questions: How does the Russian Federation Strengthen the Statehood of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic? What are the strategic benefits for Russia of cooperation with Transnistria?

The author's motivation for the research is the topicality of the subject matter and its priority for the security of not only Moldova, but also of the whole Europe. The ongoing war in the east of Ukraine (2014- ) is the best example of the fact that the functioning of parastatal states and Russian support for them is a challenge for the entire international community. Author used a various research tools including analysis of documents and statements of leading political decision-makers of the Russian Federation and Transnistria. The events of the second decade of the 21st century have priority.

## Historical Background to the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic Uprisings

Transnistria (the official name of the unrecognized state: Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic) is a region of Moldova located on the left bank of the Dniester River and includes the right-bank town of Bender with its surrounding villages. According to the latest census conducted by the authorities in Tiraspol in 2015 (Tiraspol is the capital of the parastatal state), the territory of Transnistria is inhabited by 476,000 people. What is characteristic, the majority of the population is Slavic (29.1 percent - Russians and 22.9 percent Ukrainians).<sup>3</sup> Notably, the Moldovans living in the area (28.6 percent of the population) are strongly pro-Russian and have a Russian (Soviet) identity.<sup>4</sup> Transnistria is the only region in the world where citizens write the Moldovan language in the Cyrillic alphabet, but from the perspective of the whole society it must be said that Russian is the dominant language in administration and daily communication.<sup>5</sup> This identity identification, completely different from the rest of Moldova, is a result of the history of the region. Slavic civilization strongly influenced Transnistria in the 5th century as part of the extensive colonization of Slavs from the Don River to the Elbe River. As early as the 8th and 9th centuries, the Slavs became the dominant force in the Transnistrian region. Until the middle of the 10th century, the Slavs resisted attempts to include this territory in Kievan Ruthenia, but in the end, most of Transnistria managed to submit to the prince Svyatoslav Igorevich. However, the rule of Kiev did not last long, because already in the 11th century the area was under the rule of nomadic tribes, while the Mongols conquered the whole Kievan Rus in the 13th century.<sup>6</sup> Despite the brief influence of Russia on the Transnistrian lands, one of the arguments accentuated by the elite of Tiraspol that Transnistria is an extreme area of the Russian World and its inhabitants have a Russian identity.<sup>7</sup>

The international community treats Transnistria as an integral part of Moldova. It has in fact functioned as an independent entity towards the political center in Chisinau since the early 1990s, including foreign policymaking, its central bank (and its own currency, the Transnistrian ruble) and political system. The Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic is a result of the Transnistrian-Russian War (1992), which ended in the success of separatist troops. Moldova begun the process of military suppression of separatist sentiments in the rebellious region, which, after the Republic of Moldova regained sovereignty, expressed the

desire to separate from the country and build a separate state. Chisinau has encountered strong resistance to the mobilized potential of Transnistria, supported by voluntary forces from other post-Soviet states that have defended Transnistria's membership of the Russian World.<sup>8</sup> Particularly important points in the planning activities of Moldovan strategists were Dubossary cities (due to the proximity of the largest hydroelectric power plant) and Bender on the right bank of the border, which were a shield for the capital of the paraphernalia, in other words Tiraspol. Not without significance was the significant support of the Russian Federation in the course of military operations. Russian (formerly Soviet) troops of the 14th Army stationed near the city of Bender, which were directly involved on the side of Transnistria. This was a key event that helped to break the siege of the city, which had lasted since April 1992, as part of the Moldovan operation "Trojan Horse." In June 1992, the merged Russian and Transnistrian troops finally succeeded in clearing the city of the Moldovan armed formations.<sup>9</sup>

Due to the change in the strategic situation to the detriment of Moldova, political decision-makers decided to initiate peace talks. In the end, both sides accepted a peace agreement 21 July 1992. The document signed by the Presidents of Moldova (Mircea Snegur) and the Russian Federation (Boris Yeltsin) indicates the desire to seek a peaceful solution to the armed conflict in the Transnistrian region, confirming compliance with the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Conference on Security, and Cooperation in Europe. The parties to the conflict are obliged to take steps towards a ceasefire and any armed action against each other, to remove military equipment, weapons and military units within 7 days so that a security zone can be established between them. Under Article 2 of the Agreement on the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova, a Control Commission consisting of representatives of the three parties (Moldova, Russia, and Transnistria) had to maintain security in the zone. In addition, the Commission was to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire measures. The city of Bender became its seat. The parties have declared the secondment of military contingents in charge of peacekeeping in the zone in accordance with the decisions taken by the Commission.<sup>10</sup> Since then, a process of unsuccessful peace negotiations for a final settlement of the breakaway status of Transnistria has begun, which is still ongoing today. From that moment on, the process of fruitless peace negotiations, which are still ongoing

today, began, leading to the final settlement of the separatist status of Transnistria. At the same time, the process of consolidating the statehood of Transnistria is progressing, which would not be so dynamic if Tiraspol did not have such multifaceted support from the Russian Federation.<sup>11</sup>

## **Influence of the Russian Federation on Strengthening the Statehood of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic and Independence from Moldova**

Cooperation between the Russian Federation and Transnistria is multifaceted. Strengthening bilateral relations is a strategic objective of the authorities in Tiraspol. Both political decision-makers and the people of the region see good relations with Russia as a guarantee of the existence of the parastatal state in its present form and as a factor strengthening the welfare of the society. The intensively developed bilateral relations relate primarily to the areas of military, economic, and social cooperation, as well as political and diplomatic cooperation.

In the case of the military dimension of cooperation between Tiraspol and Moscow, it is worth stressing the presence of Russian armed forces in Transnistria. The mission, which aims to maintain peace in the territory of the rebellious region, consists of 402 soldiers, stationed in the area of 15 most important checkpoints along the Dniester River.<sup>12</sup> The already mentioned 1992 peace agreement set out their responsibilities. Moreover, Russia's military support for Transnistria manifests itself in the stationing in Tiraspol of the so-called Russian Military Operational Group in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova (Rus. Operativnaya gruppa rossiyskikh voysk v Pridnestrovskom regione Respubliki Moldova), which was created as a result of the transformation of the Russian forces of the 14th Army in 1995. The estimated size of these military personnel is about 1200 soldiers.<sup>13</sup> The aim of cooperation of this formation in the territory of the parastatal state is to secure post-Soviet weapon storage sites (mainly a large warehouse of weapons and ammunition in the village of Kolbasna) and to respond to the symptoms of instability in the region. Notably, the Operational Group is not a mechanism established based on the peace agreement ending the Moldovan-Transnistrian war, as Moldovan decision-makers have repeatedly stressed. In the eyes of Moldovan decision-makers, the presence of this formation undermines Moldova's constitutional provisions, its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the fundamental norms of international law.<sup>14</sup>

The Tiraspol administration, on the other hand, is signaling the high level of effectiveness of the current form of the peacekeeping mission, as evidenced by the lack of armed clashes in a separate security area since the establishment of the forces. Moreover, it is a disincentive for the Republic of Moldova to try again to pacify the separatist sentiments in Transnistria militarily. When assessing the Russian military potential operating in the parastatal area (mainly battalions of motorized riflemen), it is worth noting that it is large enough to adequately secure the most important points of the region, such as the capital and the right-bank Bender. This is possible with coordinated cooperation with the potential of Transnistria (the parastatal armed forces are about 7,500 soldiers). In the strategic dimension, the neighborhood of Transnistria with Ukraine is important. Concentration of potential on the Moldovan (Transnistrian)-Ukrainian border could contribute to destabilization of the southern part of Ukraine, in other words the Odessa region (although these forces would not be able to resist joint actions of Moldovan-Ukrainian forces effectively). Consequently, the Russian armed forces in the Transnistrian region are not only a direct threat to Moldova's security, but also a challenge to regional security.

As far as the economic and social sphere of support for the PMR (Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic) provided by Russia is concerned, it is worth mentioning a few aspects of it. The way the region's economy functions is important for the proper interpretation of bilateral cooperation between these entities. Due to the small internal market, Tiraspol focuses primarily on exports of its goods to foreign markets. Moscow is a key trading partner for Tiraspol. According to 2018 data from the State Customs Committee of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, relations with Russia account for 29 percent of total trade in Transnistria. In addition, Transnistrian exports to the Russian market have increased by 34 percent compared to 2017. Transnistria exports to the Russian Federation mainly chemical products, vegetables (fresh and frozen), clothing, and engineering products.<sup>15</sup> In addition to intensive trade between entities, it is worth stressing the importance of the Russian labor market, which generates significant revenues for the Transnistrian budget. The majority of paraphernalia's inhabitants who decide to work abroad are now going to Russia. An example illustrating the importance of this important issue is data from the Transnistrian Republican Bank. The only in the period from January to March 2019; the volume of private money transfers transferred via electronic

systems amounted to over \$22 million. As much as 62.9 percent (in other words about \$5 million) of this amount were money transfers from persons residing in Russia.<sup>16</sup>

Targeted subsidies and gas subsidies are an extremely important manifestation of the Russian Federation's financial support for strengthening the state of Transnistria.<sup>17</sup> Russian direct subsidies strengthen a number of aspects of the parastatal state's social security. For social security, since 2008 the Russian Federation pays out allowances for the pensions of quasi-state residents. In addition, it also supports health care (financing the modernization of hospital wards, purchase of modern equipment) and education (financing the construction, and renovation of schools and kindergartens, printing textbooks).<sup>18</sup> In this context, the organization of the Eurasian Initiative in Moscow (Rus. Avtonomnaya Nekommercheskaya Organizatsiya 'yevraziyskaya integratsiya'), which provides a platform for material aid to Transnistria, is important. The organization started its activity in 2012 and thanks to Russian funds; it was possible to implement many social projects in the parastatal area, including the construction of schools and kindergartens (e.g. the construction of kindergarten no. 6 in the Rybnica area).<sup>19</sup> It is worth remembering that the above-mentioned organization and the "Eurasian Transnistria" project are part of the Russian Federation's propaganda tools for strengthening the image of Transnistria as part of the "Russian World," in other words the Russian cultural and civilization space.<sup>20</sup>

The discussed tools used by Moscow are a priority for the functioning of the unrecognized state and the position of its inhabitants on the potential reintegration of Transnistria into the Republic of Moldova. Financial support not only determines the survival of Transnistria in its current form, but also strongly reinforces the public's reluctance to consider reintegrating into Moldova in the future, as social standards are significantly higher in Transnistria than in Moldova. Moldova, as the poorest European country, does not appear to be an attractive entity for the population of the parastatal state and therefore sees no need for reintegration. Notably, if Tiraspol were to be completely deprived of support from the Russian Federation, the parastatal state will not be able to continue to exist without serious problems in the economic sphere.

Since relations between Russia and Transnistria are asymmetrical (in Russia's favor); Transnistria is not a fully independent entity in terms

of creating political lines. With its economic instruments, Moscow is largely creating Transnistrian political elites, as the support of Russian decision-makers building the prosperity of the PMR is an important factor for the electorate during the elections in the parastatal territory. Therefore, the political forces of Transnistria are competing for support from the Russian ally. It is worth remembering that the characteristic feature of the PMR's party system is the strong pro-Russianism of all parties (ideological homogeneity).

An example perfectly illustrating the influence of the Russian Federation on the power structure of the parastatal state is the recent presidential elections in 2016. The winner was Vadim Krasnosielski, who in the past worked for the Sheriff holding company, the largest company in Transnistria, which is part of the empire of post-Soviet billionaires Victor Gushan and Ilya Kazmaly, who have companies in Russia and Ukraine.<sup>21</sup> Not without significance was Krasnoselsky's strong pro-Russian attitude, which in the perception of Transnistrian society was to guarantee further cooperation with Moscow, extremely important for the functioning of the parastatal state in its current format, or the rapid implementation of the postulate to join Transnistria to the Russian Federation.

Finally, the Russian Federation is involved in the negotiations on the final settlement of the status of Transnistria. Moscow has repeatedly supported the interests of Tiraspol during the talks. It is worth mentioning that it was the Russian side that was the architect of the so-called the Kozak Memorandum (2003), which advocated the federalization of Moldova as a solution to the Chisinau-Tiraspol conflict, in other words strengthening the position of the region in the structure of the Moldovan state, which would de facto mean legitimizing its independence.<sup>22</sup>

## Ideological foundations of Russian Foreign Policy

To interpret the short- and long-term strategic benefits of supporting non-recognized states properly (in this case Transnistria) for Russia, one should first consider the ideological foundations of Russian foreign policy and its perception and position in international relations. Undoubtedly, the political line created by Russian decision-makers fits into a realistic concept of international relations, emphasizing the priority of the national interest and the need to defend its values against threats from the international environment, emphasizing the

need to use hard power resources. It is worth recalling the words of Hans Joachim Morgenthau, who pointed out that the main axis of clashes between states is the struggle for political power understood as the psychological relationship between those who hold power and those who are subject to it.<sup>23</sup> Only the maximization of power gives an adequate level of security. Russian decision-makers display strong geopolitical thinking. In addition, two currents of thought that have had a huge impact on the process of forming a perception of Russia's place in the global game for power: Isolationism and Eurasianism. The representative of the first trend was Vadim Tsymburskiy, who in his article entitled "The Island of Russia. The perspectives of Russian geopolitics" (Rus. Ostrov Rossiya. Perspektivy rossiyskoy geopolitiki) emphasized that in the space between the Atlantic and the Pacific there are two civilizations next to each other: Russian and Western. Russia's large territory and Russian hegemony over large areas in the past are extremely important. The population living in the Russian Federation has a different perception of the world than the representatives of the western civilization.<sup>24</sup> According to Tsymburskiy, the main concern of the Russian center of power should be to prevent other entities from interfering in the internal affairs of the state, while in terms of external policy; the Russian influence should spread to the western and southern border areas.

In the case of Eurasianism, the most famous representative of this ideological trend today is Alexander Dugin. He postulates a rebirth of Russia as Eurasia, a messianic empire that will balance the global influences of Atlanticism. It is worth noting Dugin's 2009 publication *The Fourth Political Theory*, which is still under discussion. The geopolitician stressed the need to create a new ideology that would be an adequate response to the security challenges of the 21st century. It is to be an alternative to the hegemonic position of liberalism, in which he sees the greatest threat to the Russian Federation and the whole world. The starting point for his deliberations is the thesis that the three most important political theories of the 20th century were communism, fascism, and liberalism. Although the latter defeated fascism and communism, Dugin sees the crisis of the "second wave of democratization" and social discontent in various states, and therefore proposes to mobilize international efforts to create a fourth theory, a bridge between East and West.<sup>25</sup>

All the above trends influence the foreign policy of the Russian Federation and the perception of its position in international relations.

A characteristic feature of the created political line is the influence of conservatism, which postulates the need for restitution of tradition, Russian culture, and Orthodox values, as well as manifestation of distinctness in relation to the West. Emphasizing Russian traditional values such as hierarchy, a strong center of power (reference to the tsarist self-leasing), a strong national identity and perception of Russia as a great power is an extremely important component building the identity of Russians. Due to its historical history, the Russian Federation perceives its importance on the international arena in the multi-layer categories, and thus the post-Soviet space states appear to be a traditional sphere of influence. An effective tool for the implementation of the postulate strengthens the identity of Russians and the reintegration of the post-Soviet area as a supra-state community is the already mentioned concept of the Russian World.<sup>26</sup> The Russian administration has often stressed the defensive nature of the political line, explaining all the aggressive actions that are necessary to respond to the hostile actions of the West. Russia appears in this view as a "besieged fortress," in other words an entity that alone resists the destructive forces of the Atlantic states, striving to weaken its international position. For example, Moscow indicated that Western support for colorful revolutions threatens Russian civilization and minimize its impact in the traditional sphere of influence.<sup>27</sup> This is an unacceptable situation for a state whose foreign policy priority is to restore its position as a power capable of transforming the world order.

### Strategic Benefits for the Russian Federation Arising from Support for Transnistria

The place of parastatal states in Russia's strategy should be considered through the prism of such a political line. As Sergey Markedonov rightly points out, the geopolitical rivalry-taking place between the West (interpreted as a merger of the powers of the USA, the European Union, and NATO) and the Russian Federation determines the political and social situations of the parastatal states.<sup>28</sup> By cooperating with the unrecognized Transnistrian Republic of Moldova, Russia receives a number of benefits for its positioning in international relations. The existence of an entity within the Republic of Moldova, which reveals separatist tendencies and is strongly linked to Russia, means that Moldovan politicians must take into account Moscow's stance on the country's activity in the international arena. The Kremlin's priority is to keep Moldova in the orbit of Russian influence and to keep it in its sphere of influence. Transnistria is a useful instrument for exerting

pressure on Chisinau. Russia is sending a clear message – if Moldova intensifies its efforts to participate in Euro-Atlantic structures (the European Union and NATO), it will support (also militarily) Transnistria's efforts to break away from Moldova, which will destabilize the country's internal situation. Such a scenario carries the risk of, for example, unfreezing the Moldovan-Transnistrian armed conflict, which would pose a threat to security in the region.

The best example of preventing Moldova from becoming independent of Russian influence is Moscow's reaction to the signing of an association agreement between this country and the European Union (27 June 2014). Shortly before this document was initialed by Moldova (November 2013), the Rospotrebnadzor questioned the quality of Moldovan wines by prohibiting its import to the Russian Federation, which resulted in a 30 percent reduction in Moldovan wine exports in 2014. However, the sanctions described above did not apply to the para-state and the pro-Russian region of Gagauzia, famous for its wine production.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, after the signing of the association agreement, Russian sanctions also included a restriction on fresh fruit imports, as experts pointed out, due to a violation of laboratory control of products, and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev warned that the signing of an agreement with the EU forces Russia to re-examine trade relations with Moldova.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the Russian administration has begun to influence Moldova's human capital without extending the contracts to Moldovan workers.

In addition to these politically motivated sanctions, Moscow has begun to create an opportunity to support the separatist tendencies of Transnistria actively in the event that Moldova continues to maintain a pro-Western political line and deepen its relations with EU and NATO member states. Already in October 2014, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stressed that if Moldova withdraws from the status of a non-blocking state and participates in a political-military alliance, the people of Transnistria will be fully entitled to decide on their future. In the perception of the authorities in Tiraspol, the noticeable strengthening of Chisinau's cooperation with NATO is a tool to put pressure on Transnistria to abandon its independence and efforts to integrate with Russia.<sup>31</sup> Undoubtedly, by strengthening the independence tendencies of paraphernalia, Russia is weakening Moldova's potential for full integration with the EU, but also with NATO. Moldova's neutrality status is enshrined in Article 11 of its Constitution, but in the second decade of the 21st century, there is a

clear strengthening of Chisinau's cooperation with NATO, which is enshrined in the National Defense Strategy for 2018-2022, adopted by the Moldovan authorities in 2018. The document envisages a professionalization of Moldova's potential and an increase in funding for the defense and security sector, as shown by the doubling of the defense budget from 625 million MDL (2018) to 1.5 billion MDL (2025). It is worth noting that the systematic increase in spending on the development of the armed forces will pose a challenge to the Moldovan budget.

There is no doubt that Chisinau will count on dynamic cooperation in this area with Western structures such as NATO, which may be interpreted by Moscow and Tiraspol as an aspiration to phase out the status of a non-block state. This is justified because the content of the strategy is not just a collection of provisions concerning the short and long-term perspective of Moldova's security. The document has an annex containing an action plan for the implementation of the new defense strategy, with detailed guidelines for the planned steps, with a specification of the institutions responsible, a time horizon and estimated costs (budgetary and external financing). The annex provides for, among other things, increasing the participation of Chisinau's forces in international operations under the auspices of the UN to the battalion within 6 months of the adoption of the strategy with the support of technical and financial assistance projects from outside, or further strengthening of partnership relations with NATO, including the strengthening of defense capabilities.<sup>32</sup>

Further tightening of cooperation between NATO and Chisinau in the future may result in Moscow using Tiraspol as a tool to prevent the aforementioned cooperation and, at the same time, to keep Moldova in the Russian sphere of influence. Russia will treat the approximation of Alliance structures as a threat to national security and its privileged position in the post-Soviet area.. The Russian Federation uses its influence over the unrecognized Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, which in this context is an instrument of reactive policy of the Russian Federation, in other words taking steps to counteract the weakening of the hegemony's position in the post-Soviet space. Russia may inspire the Transnistrian administration to reveal anti-Moldovan sentiments among the people of the region, which will ultimately deepen the country's internal destabilization. The lack of full control of the center of power in Chisinau over the entire territory of the country is an effective barrier to integration with Western political structures. Thus,

the first important function of the Moscow-Tiraspol strategic partnership is to prevent the Republic of Moldova from being included in the Western sphere of influence (full participation in the European Union and potential participation in NATO).

The Russian Federation tries to take all steps to protect its possessions (integration of the post-Soviet area and hegemony status), which strengthens its capacity to match the political resources of adversaries from the western civilization. Transnistria not only strengthens Russia's position in competition for membership in the Western or Russian sphere of influence, but also weakens its independence and freedom in creating its foreign policy lines. As the intensity of the conflict increases in eastern Ukraine (2014- ), some researchers pointed to the possibility of using the territory of Transnistria as a starting point for convenient military operations in the Odessa region due to its geographical location and the common Transnistrian-Ukrainian section of the border. Although these assumptions have not worked, it is impossible not to agree that Transnistria is an important component of the ongoing conflict. Many Transnistrian volunteers with experience on the battlefield due to their participation in the Moldovan-Transnistrian war are strengthening the separatist ranks of Donetsk and Lugansk. As the prosecutor of Chisinau, Igor Popa, stressed, the recruitment of Moldovan militants is increasing and constitutes a clear threat to the state.<sup>33</sup> In addition, Ukrainian separatists are buying weapons and ammunition from the aforementioned warehouse in Kolbasna. The stationing of Russian armed forces in Transnistria is an instrument of psychological pressure on Kiev. The alliance ties with the separatist Transnistria strengthen pressure on Ukraine and constitute a potential source of danger for that country.

Thanks to the benefits described above for the Russian Federation resulting from supporting the statehood of Transnistria, it is strengthening its position in the global competition for power with adversaries, in other words the Euro-Atlantic states. The current lack of prospects for reintegration of Moldova's territory distracts the country from the goal of full participation in EU structures, and thus keeps it in the Russian sphere of influence. Despite clear efforts of member states to implement appropriate structural reforms in Moldova, which would allow it to meet the Copenhagen Criteria or the active action of EU representatives during the 5 plus 2 negotiations, Russia wins the competition for Moldova's membership in a given sphere of influence

(Russian or Western). Moscow using, among other things, the issue of the unregulated status of Transnistria and the low effectiveness of Moldova's political line towards paraphernalia due to the weakness of Moldova's political elites and the lack of a coherent approach to this problem.<sup>34</sup> Cooperation with the parastatal states enables Russia to lower the projections of Western powers in the post-Soviet area, making them an effective tool for strengthening the implementation of Russia's multi-layered aspirations.

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the cooperation of the Russian Federation with the parastatal state of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic implies many advantages for Russia's position in international relations and at the same time poses a challenge for regional security in the future. Moscow supports the strengthening of the statehood of this entity on many levels, including substantial financial support and the presence of Russian armed forces on its territory. The assistance provided affects the mood of the inhabitants of Transnistria, who are reluctant to reintegrate the parastatal state into Moldova, thus fulfilling the goal of Russia's political line of keeping Moldova in the Russian sphere of influence. Due to the aspirations of Russian political decision-makers, which have their roots in the history, political traditions, and culture of the country, the priority assumption of the Russian Federation is to maintain the position of a hegemon in the post-Soviet area, which is a traditional area of Russian influence. Therefore, every effort goes to limit the involvement of the West in this region, which is as a threat to the strategic interests of the Russian Federation. Developing friendly relations with paraphernalia is one of the instruments for reducing the importance of Western civilization and weakening the aspirations of post-Soviet states to participate in the EU and NATO. These treatments are part of the geopolitical competition for power between Russia and the West. In view of the benefits for the projection of Russia's power in the region, it should be stated that close cooperation with parastatals, including Transnistria, has a positive impact on the positioning of the country in international relations and enables the implementation of assumptions regarding the defense of the state of possession (the position of hegemony in the post-Soviet area). Therefore, we can confirm the research hypothesis. Initiated work on the article prompted the author to conduct further research on the place of states not recognized in Russian politics, including the accumulation of its power. Undoubtedly, it is worth following events in parastatal states,

such as Transnistria, for example, because of their significance for regional and global security.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For more about the theoretical framework of unrecognized countries see Nina Caspersen, *Unrecognized States: The Struggle for Sovereignty in the Modern International System* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012); Nina Caspersen, Gareth R. V. Stansfield, *Unrecognized States in the International System* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Pål Kolstø, "The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-States," *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 6 (2006): 723–740, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343306068102>; Martin Riegl and Bohumil Doboš, *Unrecognized States and Secession in the 21st Century* (Cham: Springer, 2017); Thomas D. Grant, *The Recognition of States. Law and Practice in Debate and Evolution* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1999); Lucas Knotter, "The de facto Sovereignty of Unrecognised States: Towards a Classical Realist Perspective?," *Ethnopolitics* 18, no. 18 (2019): 119–138, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2018.1504432>; Alexander Iskandaryan, "In Quest of the State in Unrecognized States," *Caucasus Survey* 3, no. 3 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23761199.2015.1086564>.

<sup>2</sup> Kristy Buzard, Benjamin A. T. Graham, Ben Horne, "Unrecognized States: A Theory of Self-Determination and Foreign Influence," *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 33, no. 3 (August 2017): 579, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jleo/eww017>.

<sup>3</sup> "Perepis' Naseleniya PMR [PMR Population Census]," *Novosti Pridnestrov'ya*, March 9, 2015, <http://newspmr.com/novosti-pmr/obshhestvo/15927>.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the historical evolution of the formation of national identity in Transnistria see Joris Wagemakers, "National Identity in Transnistria: A Global Historical Perspective on the Formation and Evolution of a Resistance Identity," *Journal of Eurasian Affairs* 2, no. 1 (2014): 50–56, <https://issuu.com/altuhoff/docs/ea-2web>.

<sup>5</sup> Transnistria has three official languages: Russian (used, inter alia, for drawing up official state documents), Ukrainian, and Moldovan (Cyrillic); *Constitution of the Pridnestrovskaia Moldavskaia Respublika*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PMR, <http://mfa-pmr.org/en/constitution>.

<sup>6</sup> Nikolay Babilunga, *Pridnestrov'ye: shagi istorii [Transnistria: Steps in History]* (Tiraspol, 2015), 17,

<http://mid.gospmr.org/sites/default/files/publish/pdf/shagiist.pdf>; eds. Kamil Całus, Marcin Kosienkowski Piotr Oleksy, Jakub Pieńkowski, Robert Rajczyk, *Naddniestrze. Historia-Polityka-Gospodarka [Transnistria. History-Politics-Economy]* (Poznań: East West, 2014), 7,

[https://www.academia.edu/10067145/Naddniestrze.\\_Historia\\_-\\_Polityka\\_-\\_Gospodarka](https://www.academia.edu/10067145/Naddniestrze._Historia_-_Polityka_-_Gospodarka).

<sup>7</sup> *Russkii Mir* (Russian World) are co-created by ethnic Russians in the territory of the Russian Federation. Citizens of the Russian Federation, Russians living in other countries, and the constitutive elements of *Russkiy Mir* are religion (the influence of this concept refers to countries where Orthodoxy dominates), Russian language and community of historical history (attachment to Russia, Soviet resentments), and cultural community and traditions; Mihail Suslov, "Russian World;" Russia's Policy Towards its Diaspora," *Notes de l'Ifri* 103, (July 2017): 12–14, l'Institut Français des Relations Internationales,

[https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/suslov\\_russian\\_world\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/suslov_russian_world_2017.pdf) ; Andrzej Wierzbicki, *Rosja. Etniczność i Polityka [Russia. Ethnicity and Politics]*

(Warsaw: Aspra, 2011): 219–221; See also John O'Loughlin, Gerard Toal, Vladimir Kolosov, "Who Identifies with the "Russian World"? Geopolitical Attitudes in Southeastern Ukraine, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57, no. 6 (2016): 745–778,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2017.1295275>.

<sup>8</sup> The functioning of Transnistria as a part of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, a part of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, as well as the meticulous course of the so-called five-month war are excluded from the subject of this article. To broaden knowledge about the background of the events that led to the creation of a paraplegic state in the territory of Moldova, see the Nikolay Babilunga, *Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika: priznannaya istoriografiya*

*nepriznannogo gosudarstva [Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic: Recognized Historiography of an Unrecognized Country]*, [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no18/1\\_babilunga.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no18/1_babilunga.pdf); "Obrazovaniye MASSR [Education of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Republic]," *Pridnestrov'ye*, <http://newspmr.com/istoriya-pmr/obrazovanie-massr>; Ol'ga Leont'yeva, Vladimir Yastrebchak, "Politicheskiye Elity Respubliki Moldova i Pridnestrovskoy Moldavskoy Respubliki: Formirovaniye, Genezis, Vneshniye Faktory [Political Elites of the Republic of Moldova and the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic: Formation, Genesis, External Factors]," *Problemy Natsional'noy Strategii* 25, no. 4 (2014), <https://riss.ru/bookstore/journal/2014-2/j25/>; Aleksandr Palamar', *Pridnestrov'ye. Istoriya v illyustratsiyakh [Transnistria: History in Illustrations]* (Tiraspol, 2010); Nikolay Babilunga, B. G. Bomesenko, P. M. Shornikov, *Gosudarstvennost' Pridnestrov'ya: istoriya i sovremennost'* [State of Transnistria: History and Present Day] (Bender, 2007), <https://www.istmira.ru/istnovei/gosudarstvennost-pridnestrovya-istoriya-i-sovremen/>; Natalia Cojocar, "Nationalism and Identity in Transnistria," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 19, no. 3–4 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610601029813>.

<sup>9</sup> Nikolay Babilunga, B. G. Bomesenko, P. M. Shornikov, *Gosudarstvennost' Pridnestrov'ya: Istoriya i sovremennost'* [State of Transnistria: History and Present Day] (Bender, 2007), 59, <https://www.istmira.ru/istnovei/gosudarstvennost-pridnestrovya-istoriya-i-sovremen/>; Natalia Cojocar, "Nationalism and Identity in Transnistria," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 19, no. 3–4 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610601029813>.

<sup>10</sup> "Soglasheniye o printsipakh mirnogo uregulirovaniya vooruzhennogo konflikta v Pridnestrovskom regione Respubliki Moldova, Moskva, 21 iyulya 1992 g. [Agreement on the Principles for Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova, Moscow, 21 July 1992]," *Rossiyskiy mirotvorets*, <http://www.peacekeeper.ru/ru/?action=view&id=89&module=pages>.

<sup>11</sup> Currently, the countries are conducting peace negotiations in the 5+2 format: Moldova and Transnistria (parties to the conflict), the Russian Federation, Ukraine, OSCE (participation as mediators), the European Union and the United States (observer status). Despite the efforts of the international community, the negotiations did not bring the expected results. See "Press releases and statements related to the 5+2 negotiations on the Transdniestrian settlement process," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-moldova/119488>; Stefan Wolff, "A resolvable frozen conflict? Designing a settlement for Transnistria," *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 6 (November 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2011.617363>.

<sup>12</sup> In addition, the Moldovan contingent (about 355 soldiers) support the mixed armed forces in the Transnistrian area, the Transnistrian forces (492 soldiers) and experts from Ukraine as observers; Aleksandr Novik, "Mirotvortsy – garant mira i stabil'nosti v Pridnestrov'ye [Miroformers - Guarantor of Peace and Stability in Transnistria]," *Rossiyskiy mirotvorets*, January 22, 2013, <http://peacekeeper.ru/ru/?module=news&action=view&id=16889>.

<sup>13</sup> "Spravochno-analiticheskaya informatsiya," Ob osobennostyakh provedeniya mirotvorcheskoy operatsii v Pridnestrov'ye ['Basic Information' on the Characteristics of the Peacekeeping Operation in Transnistria]," Ofitsial'nyy sayt Delegatsii predstaviteley v Ob'yedinennoy Kontrol'noy Komissii ot Pridnestrovskoy Moldavskoy Respubliki, <http://www.okk-pridnestrovie.org/spravka.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> It was on Chişinău's initiative that the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling on the Russian Federation to intensify the process of removing armed forces from the Transnistrian area and recognizing the need to change the format of the peacekeeping mission to a civilian mission and without the Russian Federation's potential. See Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on June 22 2018. Complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, General Assembly of the United Nations, <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/72/282>.

<sup>15</sup> "Itogi goda [Year Results]," Gosudarstvennyy Tamozhennyi Komitet PMR, January 16, 2019, <http://customs.gospmr.org/itogi-goda.html>.

- <sup>16</sup> “Dinamika denezhnykh perevodov v/iz PMR v marte 2019 goda [Dynamics of Money Transfers to/from PMR in March 2019],” Pridnestrovian Republican Bank, [http://www.cbpmr.net/data/ddp\\_28\\_04\\_2019.pdf](http://www.cbpmr.net/data/ddp_28_04_2019.pdf).
- <sup>17</sup> Despite the official narrative about the equal price of gas for Chisinau and Tiraspol, the local company Tiraspoltransgaz sells gas in the territory of the para-state at a price lower than in the territory of the Moldova: Kamil Calus, Marcin Kosienkowski, Piotr Oleksy, Jakub Pieńkowski, Robert Rajczyk, *Naddniestrze. Historia-Polityka-Gospodarka [Transnistria. History-Politics-Economy]* (Poznań: East West, 2014), 41-42, [https://www.academia.edu/10067145/Naddniestrze.\\_Historia\\_-\\_Polityka\\_-\\_Gospodarka](https://www.academia.edu/10067145/Naddniestrze._Historia_-_Polityka_-_Gospodarka).
- <sup>18</sup> For example, in 2013, the Russian Federation allocated RUB 520 million in grants to Transnistria for the purchase of modern medical equipment and laboratory diagnostics; “Investitsii v zdavookhraneniye – vklad gosudarstva v budushcheye grazhdan [Investment in Health - State's Contribution to the Future of Citizens],” Pravitel'stvo Pridnestrovskoy Moldavskoy Respubliki, <http://gov-pmr.org/item/5836>; Nicu Popescu, “Democracy in Secessionism: Transnistria and Abkhazia's Domestic Policies,” Open Society Institute, August 2006, <http://www.policy.hu/npopescu/ipf%20info/IPF%204%20democracy%20in%20secessionism.pdf>.
- <sup>19</sup> “ANO “Yevraziyskaya integratsiya” [Non-profit Organisation Eurasian Integration],” <http://eurasian.su/partner/ano-evraziyskaya-integraciya>.
- <sup>20</sup> Website of the Media Centre “Eurasian Transnistria (Rus. Yevraziyskoye Pridnestrov'ye),” <http://eurasian.su/page/o-proekte>.
- <sup>21</sup> It started activity in June 1993. Sheriff is the largest taxpayer of the separatist republic, since more than 50 percent of the taxes paid by the company is money from the holding company. In addition, it is one of the largest employers in Transnistria, employing more than 13,000 people. The Holding associates companies operating in many sectors, include a chain of supermarkets, fuel stations, plants producing alcoholic beverages (Kvint), a bank (Agroprombank), which it has monopolized many sectors of the republic's economy, including about 90 percent of the fuel market. N. A. Spartak, N. N. Yevchenko, “Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskaya situatsiya v Pridnestrov'ye [Socio-economic Situation in Transnistria],” *Ekonomicheskii Portal*, <http://instituciones.com/general/2940-socialno-ekonomicheskaya-situaciya-v-pridnesrove.html>.
- <sup>22</sup> Finally, Moldova rejected the text due to pressure from its European allies. See “Memorandum Kozaka”: Rossiyskiy plan ob'yedineniya Moldovy i Pridnestrov'ya [Kozak Memorandum': Russian Plan for the Unification of Moldova and Transnistria],” *Regnum*, May 23, 2005, <https://regnum.ru/news/458547.html>.
- <sup>23</sup> Hans Joachim Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1968), 26–27.
- <sup>24</sup> Vadim L. Tsymburskiy, “Ostrov Rossiya. Perspektivy rossiyskoy geopolitiki [Island Russia. Prospects for Russian Geopolitics],” *Polis*, no. 5 (1993), [http://www.polisportal.ru/files/File/pubvication/Starie\\_publicacii\\_Polisa/C/1993-5](http://www.polisportal.ru/files/File/pubvication/Starie_publicacii_Polisa/C/1993-5).
- <sup>25</sup> See Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory* (London: Arktos, 2012).
- <sup>26</sup> Maciej Raś, “Rosja w procesach zarządzania ładem międzynarodowym [Russia in International Governance Processes],” in *Rosja w procesach globalizacji*, ed. Stanisław Bieliń (Warsaw: Aspra, 2013), 38.
- <sup>27</sup> The media uses this term to refer to the characteristics of the activity of societies that implied socio-political transformations in a given country. Often, societies in countries affected by a Color Revolution expressed resistance. For example, existing forms of political system or government, without resorting to violence such as peaceful demonstrations, and social campaigns. Many of the Color Revolutions took place in post-Soviet countries; for example the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia (2003) and the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine (2004/2005); Joshua A. Tucker, “Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and Post-Communist Colored Revolutions,” *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3 (September 2007): 535–551, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20446502>.
- <sup>28</sup> Sergey Markedonov, “The Unrecognized States of Eurasia as a Phenomenon of the USSR's Dissolution,” *Demokratizatsiya. The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 20, no. 2 (2012): 191, [http://demokratizatsiya.pub/archives/20\\_2\\_774457151U376032.pdf](http://demokratizatsiya.pub/archives/20_2_774457151U376032.pdf).

- <sup>29</sup>Simion Chiochina, Robert Shvarts, Irina Filatova, “*God zapretov: dlya kakikh produktov iz Moldavii zakryt rossiyskiy rynek* [Year of Bans: for Which Products from Moldova the Russian Market is Closed],” *Deutsche Welle*, October 27, 2014, <https://www.dw.com/ru/год-запретов-для-каких-продуктов-из-молдавии-закрыт-российский-рынок/a-18020441-0>; “O situatsii s kachestvom i bezopasnost'yu moldavskoy vinodel'cheskoy produktsii, postavlyayemoy v Rossiyskuyu Federatsiyu [On the Situation Regarding the Quality and Safety of Moldovan Wine Products Supplied to the Russian Federation],” Federal Service for the Oversight of Consumer Protection and Welfare, Jun 20, 2014, [https://www.rosпотребнадзор.ru/about/info/news/news\\_details.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=1973&phrase\\_id=1755413](https://www.rosпотребнадзор.ru/about/info/news/news_details.php?ELEMENT_ID=1973&phrase_id=1755413)
- <sup>30</sup> “Rossiya zapretila vvoz fruktov iz Moldavii [Russia has Banned Imports of Fruit from Moldova],” Internet-portal *Rossiyskoy Gazety*, July 18, 2014, <https://rg.ru/2014/07/18/frukti-site.html>.
- <sup>31</sup> Agnieszka Miarka, “Stanowisko Polski wobec oddziaływania Federacji Rosyjskiej na bezpieczeństwo Mołdawii [Poland's Position on the Impact of the Russian Federation on the Security of Moldova],” in *Stosunki Polski z mocarstwami w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku*, eds. Miron Lakomy, Mieczysław Stolarczyk at al. (Katowice: University of Silesia, 2016), 236.
- <sup>32</sup> *Postanowleniye Nr. 134 ot 19.07.2018 ob utverzhdenii Natsional'noy strategii oborony i Plana deystviy po vnedreniyu Natsional'noy strategii oborony na 2018–2022 gody* [Resolution No. 134 ot 19.07.2018 on the Approval of the National Defense Strategy and the Plan for the Implementation of the National Defense Strategy for 2018–2022], 03.08.2018 w Monitorul Oficial Nr. 285–294, stat'ya № : 441, <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=376667&lang=2>; *Plan deystviy po vnedreniyu Natsional'noy strategii oborony na 2018–2022 gody* [Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Defense Strategy for 2018–2022], [http://lex.justice.md/UserFiles/File/2018/285-294ru/anexa%20nr.2\\_.134.docx](http://lex.justice.md/UserFiles/File/2018/285-294ru/anexa%20nr.2_.134.docx).
- <sup>33</sup> Agnieszka Miarka, “Stosunki mołdawsko-ukraińskie w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku [Moldovan-Ukrainian Relations in the Second Decade of the 21st Century],” in *Ukraina po Rewolucji Godności. Prawa człowieka-tożsamość narodowa*, eds. Tomasz Lachowski, Vitalii Mazurenko (Łódź-Olsztyn: Bookmarked Publishing & Editing, 2017), 256; “Prokuror Kishinova: Desyatki grazhdan nashey strany voyuyut na yugo-vostoke Ukrainy [Chisinau Prosecutor: Dozens of Citizens of Our Country are Fighting in the South-east of Ukraine],” *Moldova.org*, <https://www.moldova.org/ru/прокурор-кигинёва-десятки-граждан-на/>.
- <sup>34</sup> Note the European Neighbourhood Policy (2004) included Moldova and it is a member of the Eastern Partnership (since 2009); See “Moldova,” European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/moldova\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/moldova_en).