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Frozen and Forgotten Conflicts in the Post-Soviet States: Genesis, Political Economy and Prospects for Solution (Lessons from Moldova)

Brief description of the Manuscript

The Manuscript refers to one of **the most disputed issues in post-Soviet modern history – regional conflicts in the Black Sea – South Caucasus – Caspian region**, their roots, current status and prospects for resolution. The conflicts in secessionist regions of Georgia - Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Azerbaijan – Nagorno-Karabakh, and Moldova – Transnistria, emerged as a war on Soviet succession in the words of Dr.Charles King, professor of Georgetown University. The existing status quo of “no peace, no war” in these areas permits the consolidation of the separatist regimes, encouraging their transformation into effectively independent state-like structures. This stalemate undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the legitimate states; obstructs their political, social and economic development; and is a constant source of tension in their societies, as well as in the respective regions.

The importance and new value of the proposed manuscript derive from its purposes that consist of the identification of a) political, economic and historical roots of these conflicts, b) effective mechanisms for their resolution and c) role and limitations of external factors, such as the EU, OSCE, the UN and, especially, Russian-American cooperation, in promotion of peaceful solutions.

The separatist regimes are beyond any national or international control and benefit from criminal activities: money laundering; contraband; and illicit trafficking in human beings, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and weapons’ proliferation. Firearms, rocket launchers, and mortars manufactured in Transnistria, for example, were found in other conflict zones, falling into the hands of criminal and terrorist groups. The negative impact of this threat to the international community and global security might be compared with that of terrorism, and therefore it is

imperative to have a clear understanding of the sources, political economy and prospects for resolution of these conflicts.

The major topics of this research include historical, political, economical and cultural dimensions of conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. These conflicts represent intriguing case studies for think-tanks, such as International Crisis Group, Association of the Bar of the City of New York, Moldova-Ukraine-Romania Expert Group, but have also become a serious concern for United Nations, European Union, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), NATO and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), international forums, conferences and mass-media. This new international approach with increased visibility and transparency of the search for solutions to almost two decades “frozen” conflicts represents an intrinsic value per se and may inspire some hope. But these mechanisms do not work automatically. It is also obvious that sometimes international bodies confer a certain degree of legitimacy to the separatists, accepting them as partners in the process of negotiations. That’s why the critical reassessment and adjustment of international peacekeeping and peacemaking mechanisms to new realities is vital necessary, and these are important subjects of my analysis.

The main scope of the manuscript is to demonstrate that successful and durable resolution of the conflicts in the post-Soviet area can be assured only within the process of consolidation of independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Newly Independent States and only on the basis of democratic principles, respect for human and national minority rights, freedom of expression, private property, the rule of law, which are the core ideas of reforming and strengthening of national statehood. The recent evolutions, for example, in Georgia – crisis of the “Rose Revolution” - unquestionably proved that support from outside (international community, including governmental and non-governmental organizations and assistance programs in various fields) is of critical importance to success, especially in the elaboration of a conflict resolution strategy and the initial stage of its implementation. But in long perspective the peace building, reconciliation process will be efficient and durable only if it is self-sustainable. The question that I addressed in Manuscript is how to ensure such sustainability, how to reintegrate the separatist regions into internationally recognized states without undermining these countries’ national

identity, without prejudicing their performance and prospects for democratic development and European integration.

The manuscript is focused on practical aspects of conflict resolution, particularly, on the role of the foreign (Russian) military presence in the conflict areas, the role of international organizations, national/international mechanisms for negotiations, and peacekeeping forces. The presence of Russian troops and ammunition in conflict zones, for example in Moldova and Georgia, does not help to facilitate a solution. The military factor, in conjunction with other mechanisms of Russian economic and political support for the separatists and continuing pressure on the legal authorities represents a major impediment to successful conflict resolution. Regional conflicts and disputes on their possible solution – be it Kosovo in the Balkans or secessionist regions of ex-Soviet countries, such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, or Transnistria in my native Moldova - represent some kind of mini “cold wars” between the West, led by the United States, and Russia. That’s why it is so important to understand the political economy of the “frozen” conflicts, and to prevent their evolution into another cold war.

Addressing these issues is important for the strengthening the basis of independence and territorial integrity of involved states, but also for enhancing security and stability in Europe, for reconfirmation of credibility of the OSCE as represented by the 55 heads of state that signed the Istanbul 1999 Declaration.

One of the **most critical aims of the proposed manuscript is to raise the level of public awareness in the USA, as well as in Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, about the role of outside support in effective promotion of conflict resolution.** Political and financial support provided to these countries by the Congress and the U.S. administration first of all through the Freedom Support Act, Millennium Challenge Corporation, should not be viewed as a simple charitable act or as inefficiently used (wasted) money of taxpayers. As the 9/11 terrorist attacks against United States harshly demonstrated, the cost of peace and security is very high, and should be paid to eliminate/reduce the sources of terrorism and promote authentic democratic values and reforms in the Newly Independent States (NIS), preventing the growth of authoritarianism and the reestablishment of the old rule under pressure of unsolved problems of

separatism and economic and social hardships. This is an important aspect of my research, and it is consistent with my background and with the US approach to develop policy-relevant assessments of the mechanisms and the “costs and benefits” of international conflict management.

The uniqueness and originality of the manuscript reside in the combined theoretical approach and practical orientation of the research, based on my experience as a member of the consultant team of Mikhail Gorbachev, the President of the Soviet Union (1987-1991), as Adviser and Deputy Chief of Cabinet to Mircea Snegur, First President of the Republic of Moldova (1992-1994), and as a member of the Moldovan government with service as Minister of Privatization (1994-1997), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (1998), and Ambassador of Moldova to the U.S. (1999-2002). In all these positions I had the opportunity to follow very close the emergence and evolutions of regional conflicts, especially that in Transnistria, to prepare analytical notes and proposals for Soviet Union and later on Moldovan leadership, and, to some extend, to contribute to their practical implementation.

On September 25, 2001, the United States Helsinki Commission held a hearing on the subject “Moldova: Are the Russian Troops Really Leaving?” As the then Ambassador of Moldova to the USA, I was among the initiators and participants in this event. The hearing reconfirmed American interest in the destruction or removal of Russian materiel and troops by the deadline specified by the OSCE 1999 Istanbul Declaration. The following evolutions did not add too much clarity on status and prospects for conflict resolution in spite of efforts made by Moldovan government, particularly, the Law on Transnistria settlement adopted by Moldovan Parliament in July 2005, and those of the United States and International organizations. As D.Kramer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, recently mentioned in his Testimony before the U.S. Helsinki Commission (November 2007) “there has been no progress on Russian withdrawal from Moldova since early 2004”.

I accomplished my tour of duty as Ambassador in 2002 after parliamentarian elections that brought to power unrestructured party of Moldovan communists, their first secretary, Vladimir Voronin, being elected President of Moldova. The conflict resolution issues became the major task of my senior fellowship programs that I won at the Washingtonian think-tanks: Woodrow Wilson

International Center for Scholars (2002), National Endowment for Democracy (2003) and United States Institute of Peace (2004), where I started to write this manuscript. I continued my research as Eminent Scholar and Associate Professor of Economics of Virginia State University (since August 2004) and Senior Fellow at the Center for Security and Science at Liberty University since 2002). I finished this Manuscript in November 2007. My conclusions and findings I presented in series of articles, brochures and reports to various international and U.S. conferences, particularly at the Oxford Roundtable (2007) and Virginia Social Science Association (VSSA) annual conferences in 2006 and 2007 with a subsequent publication in Virginia Social Science Journal in 2008.

I used **comparative analysis as a method to investigate the origins and development of these conflicts and the role of political elites** as factors facilitating solutions or, vice versa, impeding this process. Comparison of the various concepts, strategies and practical approaches to peacemaking in Transnistria, Abkhazia South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh permit assessment of their viability and effectiveness, evaluation of the risks of autonomization and federalization of respective states as possible conflict resolution outcomes. The parallel analyses of the development of three major conflicts in the post-Soviet area are based on the assumptions that there are some similarities between them even if these conflicts are not similar from their political and economic roots, ethno genesis, historical and cultural background, and prospects for solutions. The manuscript is analyzing also the differences between these conflicts that are no less important than their similarities.

Evidence of limiting factors and policy options - drawn from hearings in the Congress and Helsinki Commission of the United States; seminars, round tables, conferences at the USIP, Woodrow Wilson Institute for International Scholars, National Endowment for Democracy and other scholarly institutions; interviews with American, Moldovan and international decision-makers and experts in conflict resolution; various books, articles and archives investigation - has been used to elaborate the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

The potential audience of the manuscript includes (but not limited):

- a) Universities' students and faculty of the Public Policy Schools, Schools of Liberal Arts and Education, Schools of Government and Schools of Diplomacy and Foreign Service, Schools and Centers of International Studies;
- b) Researchers and scholars at such think-tanks as Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, US Institute of Peace, National Endowment for Democracy, Center for International Strategic Studies, International Crisis Group; Council for Foreign Affairs, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, Center for Security and Science;
- c) Specialists and diplomats of the Department of State, National Security Council, USAID, countries' teams and experts of the World Bank and IMF,
- d) UN, EU and OSCE specialized organizations and institutions;
- e) Universities' researchers, students and faculty, Institutes for Public policy and other relevant non-governmental organizations in countries involved in regional conflicts, including Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Russia and Romania;
- f) Library of Congress and Universities' libraries, journalists and staff writers of the major US specialized magazines, newspapers and mass-media of these countries.

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January 24, 2008