

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**Geopolitical Studies**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Russian patronage to unrecognized  
states since the annexation of  
Crimea: A cross case study of the  
Republic of Abkhazia and the PMR**

|                 |                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Author          | <b>Heidi Tilse Koelle</b>      |
| Subject:        | <b>GPS</b>                     |
| Academic Year:  | <b>2016/2017</b>               |
| Supervisor:     | <b>doc. PhDr. Martin Riegl</b> |
| Date Submitted: | <b>11 May 2018</b>             |

**DECLARATION:**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, based on the sources and literature listed in the appended bibliography. The thesis as submitted is 15903 keystrokes long (including spaces), i.e. 73 manuscript pages.

I would like to thank Martin Riegl and Bohumil Dubos for facilitating my interest in unrecognized states. I also extend my thanks to my interview subjects. I appreciate your willingness to speak with me and give me deeper insight that lies beyond the texts.

## **Contents**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Useful Acronyms.....</b>                                 | <b>4</b>  |
| Chapter 1- Introduction .....                               | 5         |
| <b>Chapter 2 Methodological and theoretical scope .....</b> | <b>12</b> |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Chapter 3 The role of a patron state.....</b>                            | <b>21</b> |
| <b>Chapter 4 The Role of the Russian Federation as a Patron State .....</b> | <b>30</b> |
| <b>Chapter 5 Case study 1 : The Republic of Abkhazia .....</b>              | <b>43</b> |
| <b>Chapter 6. Case study 2: Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic.....</b>      | <b>59</b> |
| <b>Chapter 7 General Conclusion.....</b>                                    | <b>76</b> |
| <b>Abstract.....</b>  | <b>78</b> |
| <b>Bibliography .....</b>   | <b>79</b> |

## **Common Acronymns**

**CSTO** Collective Security Treaty Organization

**Eap: eastern partnership**

**EU- European Union**

**EUBAM- EU Border Assistance Mission to Ukraine and  
Moldova**

**EEA- Eurasian Economic Union**

**MAP- Member Action Plan**

**NATO- North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

**PFP Partnership for Peace**

**PMR Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic**

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 The situation

The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula on March 18th 2014 by the Russian Federation signaled a new era in the course of Russian Geopolitics and provoke numerous reactions among the community. It served as a wakeup call to the western world that Putin was serious about his rhetoric and the Russian Federation was serious about establishing itself once again as a world power. But was it really a wakeup call? 6 years before the annexation in August of 2008, Russia occupied Georgia and engaged in a brief 6 day war with Georgia. The Russian federation invaded Georgia under the pretense of protecting its' compatriots in the breakaway territory of South Ossetia. Moscow and Tbilisi relations were also in a strained over the presidency of Saakashvili who was actively courting western institutions such with the EU and NATO. The war ended with a French mediated ceasefire and six point plan. Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree that declaring its official recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and continued its maintenance of peacekeeping forces and economic support over these states (Asmsus 2010)

The Georgian -Russian conflict was swept under the rug rather quickly. The rest of the West and the much of international community quickly dismissed and undermined the Russian federation as a whole as incapable of achieving more. (IBID)There were many other events that that distracted the world from Russia's resurgence. It was not ignored, but there were other issues on the international scope that were of higher importance. For example, the Russian-Georgian war started on the day of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. China's rise as a superpower, the upcoming 2008 American presidential election and ongoing wars in the Middle East were a higher priority. It was evident again how much Russia's advancement on the international stage was overlooked in the 2012 US presidential election when Barack Obama sarcastically said in a debate with his opponent Mitt Romney " The 1980s are calling and they want their foreign policy

back” ( Kessler 2014). It only took a couple of years for the issue of foreign policy towards the Russian Federation was one of the top priorities for Washington. The Maiden protests in Ukraine, separatism in Eastern Ukraine and Russia’s subsequent invasion of Crimea blindsided much of the international community outside of the near abroad scope. The Russian Federation proved that it was once again serious about asserting itself to the international community.

One of the subsequence topics to come into question following the Crimea annexation is how and why did Russia involve itself with so called a conflicts on one it’s its neighboring states? Which territory is Russia going to annex next? One of the best ways to answer these question are to look at the geopolitical importance of Russia’s near abroad. Russia has been involved in frozen conflicts in neighboring states for years. The breakup of the Soviet Union left behind several contested territories in the newly formed republics. It has led to the establishment of four de facto states and many separatist territories within Russia and other newly independent republics. The four separatist territories that have achieved de facto state status are; The Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, Abkhazia South Ossetia, The Republic of Artsakh which is also known as Nagorono Karabekh . The Russian federation directly supports all of these entities economically and militarily with the exception of the Republic of Artsakh which is supported indirectly via Russia’s support of Armenia

The three de facto states that Russia directly supports are breakaway states from Georgia and Moldova. These frozen conflicts hold a relative geopolitical interest for Moscow. There are various reasons on both sides to foster and maintain the relationship. The Moscow believes that by supporting these states, it sways the geopolitical position of their parent states.

There are an exhaustive number studies and publications about these de facto states and their relationship to the Russian Federation. However the vast majority of them are from before the annexation of Crimea. There are only a few that address the developments of Russia’s relationship with these de facto states after the annexation of Crimea on more than a couple aspects. Has the annexation of Crimea affected the mindset of the residents in these de facto states? These de facto states have existed for over 25 years in their current state. As time passes it makes it increasingly difficult to implement their own state building mechanisms. Russia’s active role as a patron state has ensured the survival of these de facto states, how

much it helps in the state building process is another matter. Russia's patronage to these de facto states has also caused many to speculate what could be the next annexation.

## **1.2 Aims and Research questions**

The aim of this research is to evaluate the developments of the Republic of Abkhazia and The Pridnestrovian Republic of Moldova's relationships with the Russian Federation following the annexation of Crimea. Specifically, to give a cross comparison analysis to how their relationships with the Russian Federation has changed since the annexation.

The next aim is to determine if there are any changes and key developments in their state building mechanism since the annexation of Crimea and how much has Russia contributed to its state building. Does support from the Russian federation help facilitate state building or does it hinder the state building process for these de facto states? The assistance of a patron state is vital to a state's survival, but is there a point to where a de facto state is basically in a chokehold to the point where it becomes as much of an obstacle in state building mechanisms as the parent state. Other partially recognized states such as Kosovo, Palestine and Hong Kong have been more successful in their state building and achieving widespread international recognition.

The third aim is to examine the Russian Federation itself and how it interacts within it's near abroad. At present, the post-Soviet area is the macro region with the highest concentration of de facto states in the world. (Martin Riegl and Bohumil Doboš 2017) In order to understand the causation of the current status quo, it is crucial to look at Russia's concept of "compatriot" and the historical timeline of these policies. These policies have enabled Russia to intervene directly within CIS nations. The invasion of Georgia and annexation of Crimea was built on a several different justifications used by the Russian Federation. Russia's support for these frozen conflicts is also based on the same justifications. The compatriot policies that developed the end of the dissolution of the Soviet Union have the Russian federation the exact tools it requires to intervene the way it has. The other aim is to examine the

hard and soft power tactics Russia has as used within its foreign policy making within the former CIS in order to prevent them from pivoting towards the west.

These are the two questions that this research will answer

1. How has 2014 annexation of Crimea by affected the relationship The Russian Relationship has de facto states that remain dependent on Russia for their survival?
2. How does Russian patronage contribute to the state building of these de facto states?

In addition, this sub question has been formed

1. How much does Moscow benefit from the status quo situation maintaining a role in these frozen conflicts?

These following hypotheses has been formed to be tested

1. The annexation of Crimea has not significantly affected the state building and relationship with these two de facto states much more than the situation before.
2. Russia's role in supporting the PMR and the Republic of Abkhazia creates a dependence of them which in turn becomes an obstacle in their state building
3. The Russian Federation benefits from the status quo of these frozen conflicts.

### **1.3 Useful Concepts**

## **De facto state**

A de facto state exists where there is an organized political leadership, which has risen to power through some degree of indigenous capacity; receives popular support; and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a specific territorial area, over which effective control is maintained for a significant period of time. The de facto state views itself as capable of entering into relations with other states and it seeks full constitutional independence and widespread international recognition as a sovereign state. (Pegg 26) .Dov Lynch states that de facto states have met the first three criteria set by the Montevideo convention but they are missing the fourth part which enables them to form international relations. (Lynch 2004) The term *De facto state* is often used interchangeably with the term *Quasi state* . Other interchangeable terms can be “*Breakway state*”, “*Unrecognized state*” ‘*Separatist states* or “*contested states*” ‘*Racketeer state*”

**Puppet State:** A puppet state is defined as a metaphor for a state that claims to be independent but is in fact dependent on another state or actor for its survival . It is further described as “ an entity which while preserving the external paraphernalia of an independence, it is in fact lacking independence and in reality is a mere organ of the state which has set it up and merely does not constitute as a state after all”. (Raic 81) The PMR and Abkhazia have been accused by various members of the international community as being puppet states of the Russian federation.

**Right to self determination:** The concept of the the right to self determination is laid out in the UN charter . It is also known as “Jus Cogens “law. The UN charter states that people have the right to choose their sovereignty and and international status with no political interference based on respect for equal rights and fair equality of opportunity ( UN charter; Article one)

**Territorial integrity:** The principle that under international law that nation states should not attempt to promote secessionist movements or promote border changes in other nation states.

**Montevideo convention:** The Montevideo convention sets the criteria for statehood. The four qualifications are: (1.) a permanent population; (2) a defined territory; (3) government; and (4) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.

#### 1.1.4 Relevance of the study

The Russian Federation's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and annexation of Crimea in 2014 has been seen in a very black and white setting. The first is that the Russian Federation is trying to reassert itself as an imperialist power and that it used these created compatriot policies and an excuse to invade neighboring countries. The other shows it is simply trying to protect itself and near abroad from NATO encroachment ( Merhseimer 2014) . Regardless of either narrative, the geopolitical move of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are very important for Moscow. The developments on what happens in these minor separatist regions have a more of a significant effect on how the political direction of foreign policy for Moscow, Washington, and Brussels. When studying these conflicts, it can be seen that these competing narratives of Russian foreign policy is not entirely black or white, but rather a large grey area in the current geopolitical situation. These two areas could potentially be the next geopolitical focal point in the coming years. Is it possible more territories would be annexed by the Russian Federation next? Is this a continuation of the domino theory that was originally coined in the cold war? The value of this study is to provide an analysis on how much of a development has been made regarding the Russian Federation and other de facto states since the annexation of Crimea.

Another value to this study is that it can help further comprehend the complex relationship that de facto states have with their patron state and how much control the patron state has on its state building. The study calls into question of whether or not patron states are more of a help or hindrance in the long run to unrecognized states.

Lastly, this study may also contribute to the idea that two conflicting theories and concepts can in some select cases complement each other. It has been a widely accepted notion that a positivist theory and constructive ontology are irreconcilable with one another. In looking at the case of the Russian federation and its relationship in its near abroad, it can be seen that much of it is based on both classical realism and social constructivism. This study could potentially serve as an example where theories can have bridges and not walls.

## **Chapter 2 Methodological and theoretical scope**

This part of the chapter will examine the methods and give an explanation to how the empirical data as collected, the selection of the cases, the research methods used, and the rationale behind these methods and an overview of the limitations of the chosen methodology.

### **2.1 Methodology**

#### **2.1.1 The selection of the case**

To address the questions of this research, a two case cross qualitative study approach was chosen. One of the main benefits to using cross case analysis is it is less limiting than a single case variable study.

The reasons for choosing the PMR and the Republic of Abkhazia as the two case studies are for the following reasons. They both share very similar characteristics. They have all the basic commonalities of de facto states. Both states historically have a strenuous relationship. They are ethnically diverse to an extent. In 1992, Transnistria and the Republic of Abkhazia both fought civil wars with their parent state which resulted in their separatism and establishment of their de facto statehood. They are both heavily reliant on the Russian Federation for economic and military support. Both of their respective parent states underwent color revolutions in the 2000s ( Georgia 2003. Moldova 2009) Moldova and Georgia are both signatories of association agreements with the European Union and have expressed desire for NATO membership. Both experience numerous problems and obstacles from isolation due to their de facto statehood status. Abkhazians and Transnistrian both need secondary passports to be able to travel outside of their territories. Abkhazia and Transnistria, are both two ethnically heterogeneous territories whose struggle for independence is inextricably related to contentions about linguistic and cultural rights. ( Comai and Venturai 2015)

Another interesting correlation is that in both of the case studies that both of their countries are transitioning from an authoritarian regime to a democracy. They

are what is known as a “hybrid regime”. The Republic and Georgia are both classified as such. ( Economist Democracy Index 2016)

These two contrast each other in other ways as well. The separatist war Abkhazia had with Georgia was much more bloody and violent than Transnistria conflict with Moldova. ( Kolsto and Malign) The Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is much less frozen than the Moldovan-Transnistrian conflict. Abkhazia separation is based more on ethnicity while the conflict of the PMR is largely ideological. There may be some elements of ethnic conflict for with the PMR, but not at all to the same level as Abkhazia. The conflict the PMR has with Moldova is for the large part ideological. Tiraspol and Sukhumi have different motivations for their reliance on Moscow.

The second benefit is that using a cross-case analysis especially in a qualitative research is that it helps offer deeper insight to topic of study and creates new ideas and perspectives. *“Engaging in cross-case analysis extends the investigator’s expertise beyond the single case. It provokes the researcher’s imagination, prompts new questions, reveals new dimensions, produces alternatives, generates models, and constructs ideals and utopias” (STRETTON, 1969).*

There are a couple of issues with using a cross case analysis. Critiques. One of the biggest criticism that has been launched against case studies is they can be guilty of ‘having a bias towards verification, understood as a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions’ (Flyvbjerg 2004). The risk of confirming existing ideas and beliefs does not, however, seem to be an observed problem in case study research.

### **2.1.2 Research methods**

A two case cross comparison approach often allows for more flexibility in using several different research methods than a single case. (Baxter 2008) The methodology for this dissertation involved several different methods. The methods and data collection used for this studies case studies follow a qualitative and analytical-descriptive approach. A rich component of the analysis will look at historical narratives and implement the use of casual story telling from the position of the researcher.

## Participant observation

The first method chosen to gather empirical data was by participant observation and directly interviewing subjects that resided in these territories. The aim of the interviews was to get a perspective from officials that work for the foreign ministries of these de facto states and the perspective of ordinary citizens residing in these territories. There were two interviews with the foreign ministries. One from the Republic of Abkhazia and the other from the PMR. Both of these had a similar format. Logistics of obtaining an interview in person were not feasible so both interviews were conducted by online correspondence. Each foreign ministry was given a set of questions to answer. This interview was in a questionnaire format. The benefit to using questionnaires is that they work on the premise that if a researcher wants to find out something about people and their attitudes they can simply go and ask them what it is you want to know, and get the information 'straight from the horse's mouth'. (Denscombe 2010) Some of the questions were the same such to each "foreign ministry". One example is "How has the relationship with the Russian Federation changed since the annexation of Crimea in 2014?" There were different questions also asked to each ministry that pertained to the situations in the region.

There was also an interview with the ambassador of the Republic of Moldova. This interview took place at the Moldovan embassy in Prague on January 5th 2018. The aim of the interview was to discuss both the strategic and historical elements of the frozen conflict.

There was a series of informal interviews conducted in person for the second case study. The second group interviewees were chosen by a hospitality networking site called *Couchsurfing*. Couchsurfing is a website that allows for travelers to seek hosts in various places in the world. The interviews were conducted face to face in the Transnistrian city of Rybnitsa in winter 2017. There was also an attempt to interview a couple subjects in Sukhumi, but the logistics in going there were too complex. There is not a strict requirement to travel to Transnistria. The process is fairly simple compared to Abkhazia. Transnistria does not require a visa for any passport holders. They are required to register with the police at the border and are issued a card granting either a 12 hour or 24 hour card. This stay can be extended in a local office before the card expires. (Ministry of foreign affairs of the PMR)

The main advantage of interviews that the often the subject can offer some insight to issues that the researcher might not have previously thought of before. Another benefits to using interviews are that one can gain a certain amount of insight from the subjects at first hand than that could be gained from media sources. Freedom of the press is very limited in both Abkhazia and Transnistria. Freedom house gives Transnistria a rating of “ Not free”, while Abkhazia has a rating of partly free .Personal narratives can potentially offer more than media sources coming from places where freedom of the press is limited.

Interviews also can come with some disadvantages well which is the reason that the use of interviews consisted of a small part of the case study. The first reason being that some of the answers are likely to become skewed and not always represent the will of the majority depending on who is asked. The main weakness in the conducted interviews for Transnistria was that the subjects were chosen on a travel hospitality network. Because they agree to host travelers coming to PMR, their exposure to other worldviews are increased. The subjects are less isolated than the majority of residents in Transnistria. Their knowledge of English signaled that they had more level of exposure. This caused their responses to be more anecdotal than the rest of the community.

Finding subjects that represent the general outlook are not always feasible due to language barriers or the willingness to speak with a researcher about the situation in their country in fear of having negative things recorded about their country or region. This can pose a problem in a country that has a problems with authoritarianism.

Interviewees can sometimes give a response that does not match their belief or opinion. They might give the answer they are expected to give, but it might be scripted to what they believe is the appropriate response. ( Descombe 2014) This is definitely the case when it comes to interviewing government officials.

### **Literature based research**

The next method was literary based research. The literature chosen for this dissertation comes from a variety of books, academic article from top scholars and authorities in this discipline. There is already a group of prominent scholars has directly focused on examining the position of de facto states in international law, the ongoing issues of recognition and non-recognition, speculation on the future of de

facto states and prospects of conflict resolution . There are even more prominent scholars and experts on Russian policy in its near abroad scope.

Additional literature is to be selected from news articles from an array of sources from well-known online publications such as *The Economist* and various news sources of the separatist entity, its parent state,. This helps with examining the political discourse and get the narratives and perspective from all parties.

One of the biggest benefits to literary research analysis is that it is free and easily available. There is a numerous amount of work for the topic. The one thing is that can be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage that in this particular topic, one can find when reviewing the literature on the topics this dissertation encompasses.

While many of the academic articles and most book are backed by back by facts and citations, many of the authors can have a bias. Sometimes the bias can be unintentional. Many of the scholars in the literature review are from Northern Europe or the US. They often hold very pro Atlantic viewpoints and do not always view the Russian narrative as equally as they would a pro Atlantic narrative. This is more problematic with reading news articles. A news source such as Radio free Europe or sputnik news is going to have a different angle at looking at the news. Radio free Europe has a very long history of having a reputation that is very critical towards Russia. It is often accused on the other side of being American propaganda. While on the other hand when looking at the Russian publications, it can be noted that their freedom of the press rating is very low. The Russian Federation is ranked as number 148 (Reporters without borders 2018) though journalism offers a more direct and faster insight to the political discourse of a country than academic articles. The fault with journalism in an academic research is sometimes the issue with accuracy can become a problem. (Descombe 2010) A journalist is given a fast deadline to write an article or a report. The journalist is not afforded the same amount of time that an academic scholar as has. On the other side, news articles are more immediate access to the information. A large part of the developments in these case studies have happened within the past year, especially for the second case study with the PMR. It takes time for a scholar to compose a well written article and get it published immediately. Academic articles and books take longer to absorb everything and the process of putting it out to the general public.

## 2.2 Theoretical framework

This chapter will focus on the theoretical framework that shapes the geopolitical analysis of both of these two cases. The theoretical section adheres to Waltz's argument that no single theory alone is capable of producing explanations to everything. (Waltz 1990) This applies in the cases of unrecognized states in former CIS. This is why there are several theories taken in account. A Descriptive qualitative analysis allows for more flexibility in choosing multiple theories as well. The first one being Neorealism which helps explain the relationship with agents and structures in a given system. In the case, the patron state. The second one being Social Constructivism which is a theory that maintains the idea that international relations are socially and historically constructed (Wendt) Traditionally Constructivism and Realism are two rival theories in the school of International Relations. They both provide good explanations to the situation, yet both leave things out. In trying to comprehend these de facto states have formed these relationships with the Russian Federation, these two theories complement each other in a way that they can in fact be synthesized.

Realist and Constructivists have maintained that their theories are incompatible with one another for years. Constructivist theory came into the world of International Relations as a rebuttal to structural realism (Barkin 2003: 325). Realist critics of constructivism dismiss constructivists as having a worldview and methodology that is more in aligned with idealism. While constructivists claim that realists are immune to intersubjective epistemologies and methodologies are based on caricatures or a narrow understandings of realism (Barkin 2003: 326). Most self-proclaimed realists also claim their worldview also falls within liberal worldviews. (Barkin 2003: 325).

### 2.2.1 Neo realism

The majority of studies looked at regarding Russia and its role are based on the theories of neorealism. Neorealism can be used to understand the power relations between Russia and the West. The balance of power concept can put in

perspective how Russia interacts within the near abroad and why it supports the separatism within former CIS nations. NATO and the European Union's eastern expansion explains a lot of the measures it takes in order to regain its influence within its Post-Soviet Sphere. Moscow views that the eastern expansion of NATO within its borders are a threat. The response it makes is what Kenneth Waltz argues that the balance of threat theory is based not on survival but security. The annexation of Crimea was partly due to that the Russian Federation had a limited control of the black sea and the vast majority of it is surrounded by NATO member states. This is one of the reasons why Moscow created these compatriot policies and gives patronage to separatist entities within its neighborhood. (Mearsheimer 2014)

Political scientist John Mearsheimer maintains the position that Russian intervention in its near abroad that this is merely defensive. This is based within political realism. (Toal 2016 29) He identifies three core beliefs of political realism: (1) *that states are the principal actors in world affairs;* (2) *that the behavior of great powers is influenced mainly by their external environment, not their internal regime type;* and (3) *that calculations about power dominate state thinking.*

### **2.2.2 Social constructivism**

Constructivist theory also plays a major role in how these compatriot policies are created and how Moscow maintains and influence over the separatist territories. One of the problems with realist theories is that it ignores a lot of the common problems that it ignores the important role that identity and culture play into many conflicts. Social constructivism is offered as a way to place a deeper meaning and forge an understanding to these separatist conflicts. Social constructivism helps define how the *"human world is not given to us, but it is constructed by the actions of the actors itself"* ( Kratochwil 2011) Realists often do not take the time to take in account for the reason why actors have the drive for power and security . They focus on the strategic and material value on the status quo and often disregard for the contributing factors such as history and social structures. Alexander Wendt asserts that *"character of international life is determined by the beliefs and expectations that states have about each other, and these are constituted by social rather than material structures"* ( Wendt )

The Karaganov doctrine and creation of its current compatriot policies illustrate how the relations with unrecognized Post soviet states are socially constructed. (Makannon 2014) Many of these post separatist states use their history to rationalize their separatism from their parent states. Russia's use of soft power to sway its compatriots is also based on social constructivism. The Russian Federation also maintains a nostalgia for its former history that is based on constructivism.

The next chapters will show that it can be seen that realist theories and social constructivism can be combined to explain how the Russian Federation's acts as a patron state to these unrecognized states and how it shape its foreign policy in the near abroad scope.

### **2.2.3 Linkage and Leverage concept**

A concept that is examined in both of the case studies is Levitsky and Way's famous model of leverage and linkage. In their book "Competitive Authoritarianism (Problems in International Politics, they examine the trajectories of all 35 regimes that were or became competitive authoritarian between 1990 and 1995. This also includes Georgia and Moldova (Levitsky/Way.2010 4). The purpose is to assess how an authoritarian regime becomes democratized when applied pressure by western democratic communities.

#### **Linkage**

Linkage defined by Levitsky and Way as a multidimensional concept that encompasses the myriad networks of interdependence that connect individual polities, economies, and societies to Western democratic communities. These do not have to be exclusive to western international actors .Linkage can be applied to other powerful regional and global factors such as China and India. ( Sasse 2014) The concept of linkage and the factors of interdependence provides an insightful perspective on understanding Russian Foreign policy. Levitsky and Way offer these 6 type of linkages

1. *Economic linkage, this linkage is measured in flows of trade, investment, and credit;*
2. *Intergovernmental linkage, which includes both bilateral diplomatic and military ties and participation in Western-led alliances, treaties, and international organizations;*
3. *Social linkage, is classified as flows of people across borders, including immigration, exile and refugee flows, diaspora communities, and tourism;*
- 4 *Information linkage is related to flows of information across borders, via telecommunications, Internet connections, and Western media penetration;*
- 5 *Civil society linkage, or local ties to Western-based NGOs, international religious and party organizations, and other transnational networks; and*
6. *Geographic proximity to Western Europe or the United States ( Levitsky Way 2007)*

Levitsky and Way (2007) define Western leverage as “authoritarian governments’ vulnerability to external democratizing pressure.” According to them leverage can be exerted in various ways which include punitive sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and military intervention. Levitsky and Way give three main factors for leverage. The first which Levitsky and Way state being the most important factor is the size and strength of countries’ states and economies. ( Levitsky Way 2007) Governments in weak states with small, aid-dependent economies are more vulnerable to external pressure than those in larger countries with substantial military and/or economic power. The larger state which is often a regional or even global power such as the Russian Federation or the US have the bargaining power to prevent pressure from being applied, and the various. The second factor of leverage in competing issues on Western foreign policy agenda. The third of whether or not there is another alternative global or regional power that offers the same political, military economic support. **(IBID)**

These concept can be adapted into another global power other than the west. It could be Russia or China or India. ( Sasse 2014 ) Sasse states that “ *The usefulness of these concepts lies in the fact that they span the spectrum of paradigms for understanding the relationships between these two levels of politics,*

*from hegemony aspiring realpolitik at one end, to forms of international society and cooperation around common interests and norms at the other.* (IBID) This concept offers a flexible and can provide deeper insight and overlooked perceptions when looking at conflict resolution.

There are already some well-established studies on this concept applied to the Russian Federation and post-soviet de facto states and their parent states the specific aim in using the linkage and leverage concept in regard to the case studies is to connect the linkage the Russian Federation has to these de facto states and how they are applied as leverage to the parent states. According to Sasse, *“Linkages can, but do not have to, turn into leverage, and we need to know more about the conditions under which they do. Leverage denotes a clear direction of causality, whereas linkage points to sets of relationships without prejudging the mechanism, significance and direction of causality”.* ( Sasse 2014) In looking at the Russian Federation’s foreign policy, these frozen conflicts give the Russian Federation leverage to Moldova and Georgia. The case studies with incorporate these concepts by examining the linkages Moscow has to Sukhumi and Tiraspol and analyzing how effective they are at being used as leverage for the parent states .

### **Chapter 3 : The Role of the Patron state**

This chapter picks up on the aim is to conceptualize patron states and how the patron state acts as a guarantor for the unrecognized state's survival. The patron state's role in the state building of unrecognized states will be thoroughly examined and whether or not if it's patronage helps or hinders the development in the unrecognized state into question. The motivations of the patron state for supporting unrecognized states. Other factors such as the legal, security and economic aspects of state patronage will be focused on. This chapter is to set to address the "how" specifics of Russian patronage to these de facto states. Chapter 4 will examine the "why" aspect of Russian patronage and give the historical elements of ethnic separatism in the near abroad scope of the Russian Federation and address the reasons why the Russian why is a benefactor in the two case studies and other conflicts within its sphere.

The theories of both neorealism and constructivism are both relevant in these assessments. . They are both necessary for bridging the "how" and "why" aspects of how the Russian Federation is what it is today. The neorealist and constructive approaches will also be reflected this chapter and how it applies to Russia's role as a patron state for de facto states in the Post-Soviet sphere.

### **3.1.1 The survival of a defacto state**

What comes first comes into question when most look at de facto or unrecognized states is how possible for these the territory in question is able to even exist. Is it even possible to exist without any form of recognition? Abkhazia and Transnistria both declared themselves separate from Georgia and Moldova in 1992 within months after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They have largely function the same as they have since their creation.

In a contradictory way, the lack of recognition actually maintains its existence. Well known Norwegian scholar Pal Kolsto maintains the position that " *even in the absence of effective statebuilding, most quasi states have succeeded reasonably in their nation building efforts*" ( Kolsto 2006). Pal Kolsto lists five factors that explain the how these unrecognized states are able to survive in The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-States, each of these factors apply to the PMR and Abkhazia.

These factors are

1. *Authorities in these “ quasi states” are efficient in creating a common enemy from the state they are trying to secede from.*
2. *Unrecognized states remain as militarized societies.*
3. *The weakness of a parent state maintains these state’s survival*
4. *Support from a patron state increases survival by an exponential fraction*
5. *The role of an International community helps the survival of the these states( Kolsto 2006)*

While most of these points are applicable to the situation. The most applicable one for the case studies is the fourth point. It is also noted that the four other points can be connected to the fourth point. The patron state often directly or indirectly contributes to the rest of the points

The first point is that they often use the parent state or another group of to promote a common enemy. They do so by either directly or indirectly implementing an elite to do all it can in its power to keep so called citizens against the common enemy. In the facto states the biggest enemy is the parent state. The media is often subsidized by the parent state which propagate the population. The Russian federation heavily subsidizes the state owned media for both Transnistria and Abkhazia. This is the case in Transnistria. While the debate for Transnistria is that its split from Moldova is based on ideology much of the country is ruled by an ethnically Russian elite. ( Blakkisrud and Kolsto) Abkhazia does not having a ruling Russian elite, The ruling elite in Abkhazia are Abkhaz, in fact there is a clause in their constitution that only allows an ethnic Abkhaz to be president .( Caspersen 2008)

The patron state uses the weakness of the parent state to the advantage. The Russian federation gives many benefits to the residents of Abkhazia and Transnistria. A large amount of the propaganda towards Transnistria is based off of Moldova’s poverty. In fact, the average pensions and salaries are higher in Transnistria than they are in Moldova. (Nielsen 2015 ) Gazprom supplies gas to Transnistria and the debts are sent to Moldova. Abkhazia is heavily passportised by Russia. 90%of Abkhaz have Russian passports, less than 10% of them are ethnic Russians ( Artman 2008). The Republic of Abkhazia have less ethnic Russians living there than most of the Baltic and central Asian states.

### 3.1.2 Motivations for state patronage

There are numerous reasons for why a state would choose to support an unrecognized state and contribute to secessionists. Benjamin Graham cites three reasons and gives a model for each of them. 1) *As an efficient mechanism for imposing costs on the home state (e.g. as Russia does to Georgia via South Ossetia and Abkhazia); 2) ethnic solidarity with the secessionists (e.g. Turkey's support of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus); 3) hope of eventual annexation of the disputed territory (e.g. Armenia's support for Nagorno Karabek"* (Graham 2010) The second and third models can also apply for the Transnistria and Separatist regions of Ukraine. Graham wrote this two years before the annexation of Crimea and separatist issues in Eastern Ukraine.

A common and popular answer to why a nation would be interested in supporting another state is that a patron state is that it can use that territory as a way of creating leverage of over the geopolitical orientation of a nation. The Russian federation's motivation for supporting both the PMR and Abkhazia remains to be consistent in both cases. Russia fears the expansion of the Western influence and power in its neighborhood. The Russian Federation felt defeated and humiliated in the early 2000s when NATO expanded into CEE Europe. The Russian federation feels it cannot lose any more of its near abroad to western institutions. Russia benefits by having Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia in a compromised position in being integrated into western institutions because of their problems with ethnic separatism.

Maintaining influence is not only the motivation a patron state can have in supporting separatist causes. There could be some strategic value in aiding separatism.. Crimea provides the black sea fleet for the Russian empire. Abkhazia gives the Russian Federation more access in the black sea fleet. Transnistria was key in helping transport Russian products to the European market. All of these separatist causes provide some kind of strategic value for the Russian Federation. The extent of this will be covered more thoroughly in the case studies.

### 3.1.3 Outsourced territories

A large amount of the security institutions in Abkhazia and Transnistria are outsourced to the Russian Federation. Nicu Popsecu makes this argument when discussing the Russian support for separatist entities in Moldova and Georgia. He

uses defines the term term “*Outsourcing as business jargon to describe a situation in which the organisational functions of an enterprise are transferred to a third party or country*” He uses the analogy that the state institutions of the unrecognized entities of Abkhazia, Transnistria and South Abkhazia are outsourced to Russian state institutions ( Popescu 2006) Yet he notes that the difference in this case is that in the business sense the outsourcer keeps the overall control of the organizational and production functions of the enterprise, while conversely it is the Russian federation that maintains the control of these institutions and not the states. The institutions of the PMR and Abkhazia are headed by Abkhaz and Transnistria but it is the Russian Federation that has control.

Popescu states the argument can be made that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are more heavily reliant on Russia for their independence than it is on does with Georgia. Being reliant on patron support can leave these entities extremely vulnerable. These entities could not maintain themselves without the patron state. Kolsto and Blakkisrud point out that in the case of Transnistria, their De Facto statehood solely relies on whether or not the Russian federation is willing to renew its security guarantee. ( Kolsto and Blakkisrud). They follow with the statement that “ *borrowed power is unstable power*”. Nina Caspersen states that *that the reliability of patron support is certainly a concern for unrecognized states; strategic interests can change and domestic and international pressures may even lead kin states to rethink their priorities.* ( Caspersen )

While examining the present situation with the Russian Federation’s support for the PMR and Abkhazia, it does not appear that their support for these areas for their short term are not endangered. However, there are many critical uncertainties to determine whether or not Russian patronage to these territories will be indefinite or even long term. One critical uncertainty could be economics. The sanctions and economic crises that Russia was given following its annexation of Crimea that resulted in the Russian Federation suffering a great economic crisis. The poverty within the Russian Federation increased from 3.1% in to 19.2% in 2015 ( Nelson 2017: 4) If the Russian Federation continues to suffer more from economic sanctions, the Russian Federation to rethink its priorities and decide to cut or completely halt the economic support to these unrecognized states.

The domestic support within the Russian Federation lies as another uncertainty for the long term. The Russian people overwhelming support Putin’s

foreign policy at the moment despite backlash against it among the international community. ( Pew Research 2016 ) There is a strong wave of nationalist movements and the majority are staunchly in favor of protecting their compatriots abroad.

However, this could also change if Russia was to undergo an even worse economic crisis and massive inflation to where the average Russian struggles even more than from the last recession. They might stop caring about their compatriots abroad and insist more attention be brought to the Russians living within borders of the Russian Federation or in other areas of the former CIS with a higher concentration. Toal explains that in the past, Putin's support of territories that were seen fully Russian generated some problems among narrow nationalists. They mobilized around the slogan " *stop feeding the Caucasus in 2011*". ( Toal 283 2016)

Another long term uncertainty could be the status of the Central Asian CIS republics. Central Asia currently is not an area of much geopolitical importance as Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine at this very present time. These republics remain loyal to Russia for the majority of the time following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They are members of Putin's recently created Eurasian Union. However, it cannot be ignored that these former republics are from areas that are rich in oil and minerals and are working on building prosperous economies of their own independent of the Russian federation. The support from these CIS countries also remains to be another uncertainty. Jeffrey Mankoff argues in that as a result of the episode of Ukraine, other elites in other CIS countries including Eurasian members could become more reluctant to cooperate with the Russian Federation.( Mankoff 2014 )

In the end, the long term solution to being an unrecognized state that is solely dependent on one country is not viable. National interests and priorities change over time. The national interest and priorities that the Russian Federation has regarding both of these de facto states will be reflected in the case studies

#### **3.1.4 Isolationism caused by the patron state**

A patron state can contribute to the further isolation of an unrecognized state to the rest of the International community and stirs the pot in the conflict with the parent state. The Patron state "*reignites conflict with the parent state to where coming*

*up with a resolution is unlikely.* (Riegl and Doboš 2017) Nina Caspersen adds dependency on a patron state is counter-productive. *It only reinforces a siege mentality and makes unrecognized states even more dependent on their external patron and their engagement strategies are therefore increasingly being more considered by international mediators and by some parent states.* (Caspersen 2012), she follows with the argument that the approach is threefold because even though the unrecognized states call for engagement they are wary of engagement strategies that are designed to promote reintegration. The second reason is these engagements can offer benefits that they might not receive from their patron state which endanger ties with the patron state and their security guarantee. The third reason Caspersen gives is if the engagements are meaningful is that one of the unavoidable consequences is that it makes the unrecognized state more sustainable. This sounds like an ideal situation, but Caspersen points out that the problem with this is that with a negotiating settlement becomes less of an urgent issue for the unrecognized state.

However maintaining the status quo is not going to give either one of these entities statehood. Absence of any outside engagement is never going to make either unrecognized state to be recognized. It is not only the patron state or the ruling elite that contribute to the isolation of these unrecognized states. The international community and the parent state are at partial blame. The parent state can hold potential a no compromising position "reintegrate or nothing". Institutions and international actors are a likely to back up the parent state and do little to help engage the unrecognized state. This punishes the citizens in the unrecognized states and increases their reliance on the patron state to making the goal of recognized statehood unattainable. Magdalena Grono writes a report for the International crisis group stating that one of the harshest consequences for such isolation is the lack of information. Many teachers and physicians remain uninformed about the latest modern medical treatments available. Grono presents from a case experienced by herself while visiting a physician in the Republic of Abkhazia (Grono 2016)

Many de facto states also suffer because of their lack of interaction with the outside world. Arguments and debates have arisen that these de facto states are more content with the maintenance of the status quo and partial recognition by the Russian Federation is all that it is needed. One of the four main criteria for becoming a fully sovereign de jure state is to have the capacity to form relations. It takes more

than one state or four states for Abkhazia purpose. The Russian federation uses that it is respecting its territorial sovereignty of Abkhazia while at the same time hindering its ability to form relations with international institutions which is one of the cardinal principles of the Montevideo convention. The third state doesn't get to decide on the rules of secessionism. ( Abrushev 2014:198 )

### 3.1.5 The widely used Kosovo precedent

The most common argument for nearly every single separatist entity is the Kosovo Precedent. Currently there are an estimated 70 separatist groups around the world that are trying to use the Kosovo precedent to invoke their own separatism ( UNPO 2017 ). The Kosovo precedent is basically "godwin's law" in the study of unrecognized. Every argument about separatism of any kind will come to the Kosovo precedent. All of the unrecognized Post Soviet states: Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria have found a way to apply the Kosovo precedent to their own cause. Each of them established their right to remedial separatism. (

The patron state also uses this precedent as a way to back their support. The Russian Federation is no exception. Despite being the biggest critic of it. Russia was one of the member states to not formally recognize Kosovo being a strong ally to Serbia. Sergey Lavrov and Vladimir Putin immediately abhorred and denounced the Kosovo precedent immediately. Ronald Asmus that argues " *It often had less to do with the facts on the ground than with the stakes of the changing dynamic of the West's relationship with Russia.*" The Kosovo precedent was one of the first serious of series of blows to Western and Russian relations since the Cold War.

After heavily criticizing the Kosovo precedent, Putin has cited the Kosovo Precedent as a secondary cause to justify its role in intervening in Georgia in 2008. The annexation of Crimea also used the Kosovo precedent to advance their own secessionism. The declaration launched on March 11th 2014 invoked the Kosovo precedent. The declaration read as" *We, the members of the parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the Sevastopol City Council, with regard to the charter of the United Nations and a whole range of other international documents and taking into consideration the confirmation of the status of Kosovo by the United Nations International Court of Justice on July, 22, 2010, which says that unilateral declaration of independence by a part of the country doesn't violate any international norms, make this decision jointly.*" The legal aspects of the referendum,

secessionism and the subsequent annexation to the Russian Federation have been exhaustively debated. Lina Laurinavičiūtė and Laurynas Biekša offer a straightforward and example of why this does not apply to the de facto states within the Russian Federation they state that “*The cases of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transdniestria and Crimea reveal that the right to remedial secession is simply not relevant in cases which are related to the unlawful use of force or other egregious violations of the norms of international law, in particular jus cogens norms. Ex injuria jus non oritur might be considered as a sine qua non of a precondition for remedial secession. Negotiations in good faith are only possible if the conflicting parties are not influenced by third states, which violates international law, and while the mediation of the international community or third states is often necessary in the negotiation process, the participation of states “violators” might be regarded as a decisive obstacle preventing bona fide negotiations*” (2016 page 74). Legally, the patron state cannot aid in the separatist group in a country. This makes their “right to remedial secession” invalid.

While most experts in international law say their cases for separatism are not equivalent, it does not cease the use of the precedent being used as a justification.

### **3.1.6 The status quo**

A frequent topic of discussion that is often brought up within unrecognized states in particular territories from the former USSR is this question: Does the status quo seem to be more desirable for both the patron state and unrecognized territory than formal international recognition? Many argue that these states really want to just keep the status quo and it is easier for all parties. The situation cannot be treated as such. When analyzing the constitution of both of the entities, it is clearly stated that both of these states intend to be their own sovereign states. While, the PMR would like to be subsequently added by the Russian Federation. Its first goal is to be become its own legal state. . Article 1 of the constitution of the PMR states “ The PMR is a sovereign, independent, democratic legal state”.( Government website of the PMR). The Abkhaz government reads the same (Government website of Abkhazia).

Dov Lynch states that quite often in the case the status quo is often more desirable for all sides than making some type of resolution. It is also suggested by some scholars that the unrecognized status of a state helps maintain an equilibrium of a “no war, no peace”. If the conflict remains in a *frozen conflict* or *stalemate*, there can't be a war. (Lynch 2002)

For the Russian Federation, the status quo is optimal because as long as these frozen conflicts exist. The Russian Federation has position of bargaining power with these states. Rodkiewicz debates that Russia has no intention to recognize Transnistrian independence, because Transnistria is how they are able to have leverage over the Republic of Moldova (Rodkiewicz, 2011) If the conflict was resolved, the Russian Federation would lose part of its bargaining power with Moldova. The Moldovan ambassador believes the status quo is the most desire for the Russian Federation. He said that “ *Control over this enclave gives Moscow a lasting political settlement*” ( *Interview Subject Moldova 2018*)

#### **Chapter 4 The role of the Russian Federation as a patron state**

## Ties To Russia

The Kremlin says Moscow will strive to protect the interests of Russians and Russian speakers wherever they may be. We look at the regions where the greatest concentrations of Russian citizens, ethnic Russians and native Russian speakers live, outside the borders of the Russian Federation.



"Above all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century. As for the Russian nation, it became a genuine drama. Tens of millions of our co-citizens and co-patriots found themselves outside Russian territory. Moreover, the epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself."

- **Valdimir Putin**

The aim chapter is designated to focus deeper into how the Russian Federation function as a patron state. The concepts from the previous chapter are to be applied specifically to the Russian Federation. The “how and why” factors will be focused on and hard and soft power mechanisms. It will focus on how Russia has dealt with separatism in the past and why the Russian confederation created these compatriot policies that has been a defining factor in its foreign policy.

In his annual speech to the Russians in 2005, Vladimir Putin stated that the biggest geopolitical disasters of the 20th century was the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Putin had been on record as saying that “one who does not regret the passing of the Soviet Union has no heart; one who wants to bring it back has no brains. (2009). This statement has since then been interpreted in many different forms and fashions by scholars, journalists, and average private citizens. The dissolution of the Soviet Union demoted the Russian Federation and its influence to a weaker position on the world stage .The Yeltsin presidency prioritized vital strategic foreign policy and security interests, recognition by and integration with Western states, and maintaining relationships with the newly independent CIS states over the situation than the situation with the ethnic Russian diaspora (Kolsto 1996 )

#### **4.1.1 A brief history of ethnic separatism in the Soviet sphere**

A substantial amount of the separatism in Post-Soviet States can be seen to be remnants that were left over from the Soviet Era. When the Soviet Union began, many ethnic minorities were offered greater benefits for their culture, language, and history than they were offered under the Tsars in the era of Imperial Russia. (George 25) The Bolsheviks sought alliances with the minorities and convinced them to collaborate with them to fight for the Red Army in the Russian Civil war.

The Soviets had crafted a plan during the creation of the Soviet Union to maintain its foot in these CIS republics and remain a presence in these republics which would come in handy for them in the event of a collapse of USSR. The Soviet's implemented different policies around population transfer throughout the Soviet Union. There were different waves of deportations and transfer of population during the years of the Soviet Union. Millions of ethnic Russians that were considered enemies would be deported and implanted in various republics. According to historians, in the USSR, more than 6 million people were forcibly deported in between the late 30s and 40s. . Ethnic minorities such as Crimean Tatars were moved out of Ukraine sent to Siberia or soviet central Asian republics such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (Sasse 2012).

The Soviets used a divide and conquer mechanism when organizing territory. Stalin drew borders not respective to the ethnic groups living there. The Caucasus

are a good example of how this was implemented. Abkhazia and Georgia previously were their own separate but equal socialist republics. The administrative status was nullified by Joseph Stalin and Abkhazia was subordinated into Georgia in 1936 (George 2019). If the people in these Republics were divide, it was easier for the Soviet Union to conquer them.

The Moldovan ambassador brought up the use of “Russification *by marriage*” According to him “*There were drives and campaigns to get Ethnic Russians to intermarry with non-ethnic Russians such as Moldovans, Ukrainians and Belarusians to achieve the goal of a common Slavic blood line.* (Formal Interview Moldova) Gorenbourg also states that *Soviet theoretical writings on intermarriage and assimilation were based on the Communist Party’s ideological requirement that scholars promote the drawing together and eventual merger of Soviet ethnic groups.* (Gorenbourg 1996)

Towards the end of the Soviet Union, many of these republics were undergoing many nationalist movements and ethnic tension as a result. Georgia and Moldova especially were forming their own nationalist movements which made any talks of resolution difficult. This was especially apparent with the Georgian nationalist movements at the time of its independence. The region of Abkhazia underwent forced Georgianization during the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia and after its independence in 1991. Georgians in the region of Abkhazia were favored for higher education and office position despite only making up for a smaller percentage of the region. The replacement of Georgian as the official language also further angered the Abkhaz (George 2009) .

Moldova had similar revival movements. There was a large pull for unification of Romania and Moldova which angered the ethnic Russians and Ukrainians. The replacement of the Cyrillic alphabet for the Latin alphabet also helped alienate the separatists (Bower 2005) Many of them felt a loss with the dissolution of the Soviet Union as well . The new nationalist movements and policies set by the soviets would further complicate

A few of the former soviet states, in particular Moldova and Georgia the parent states of the case studies were undergoing separatist problems. Moldova and

Georgia underwent strong nationalist policies which alienated Russian and other various ethnic minorities. Many Moldovans pushed for a potential unification with Romania. The Moldovan language and alphabet was prioritized over the Russian alphabet (Roper 2005). Newly elected Georgian president pushed for forced georgianization methods within Abkhazia. Most of the higher positions in the region were given to ethnic Georgians (George 2009). Both Moldova and Georgia had a civil war in 1992. The Moldovan-Transnistrian war was much shorter and ended after only a few months. (Ibid) The Georgian war civil lasted for nearly two years. Both of these wars ended with a ceasefire agreement and the creation of separate unrecognized states all managed by Russian peacekeepers. These states still remain in a stalemate.

#### **4.1.2 The compatriot policies of the Russian Federation**

Leading up to the Russian legislation on their policies towards Russian Diaspora and the subsequent invasion of Georgia and Crimea, Moscow created the term “sootchestvennik” which translates to “compatriot”, this was a very flexible and arbitrary term that implied a common fatherland and enabled Putin to determine who exactly that included (Mannkoff 64). “Compatriot is defined in the Webster Merriam dictionary as “A person born, residing, or holding citizenship as another country as another”. The terms “compatriots” and “diaspora” are often intertwined.

#### **4.1.3 Evolution of Russian compatriot policy**

The dissolution of the USSR created many problems for the Russian Federation in dealing with the Russian diaspora. *Russia found itself politically and socially disturbing “diasporic” heritage, both external and internal.* (Mitrofanova 2004) Mitrofanova elaborates in explaining that the changes in the borders made the Russian Federation an external homeland for millions of ethnic Russians living outside of its borders. While internally it was burdened with the issue of many labor migrants from the former CIS in the 1990s. There over 25 million ethnic Russians outside of the Russian Federation living within former CIS countries. In 1993, 17% of

ethnic Russians were living in another CIS country. This number only counts for the number within the CIS.( Kolsto 1993) *The 25 million Russians constituted 35% of all former soviet citizens residing outside of their former successor state. ( IBID). In addition there was a massive flight of ethnic Russians to the United States, Israel, and Germany. Germany created similar policies predating the Russian compatriot policies. It was called *Aussiedler*, it allowed for anyone that passed as Germany under their basic law to be allowed German citizenship . The amount of German heritage did not matter. If one could prove they had any drop of German blood, they were let in. There were over 3 million Aussiedler living in Germany in the early 1990s ( Martin 1998)*

All former citizens were given were given the right to exchange their previous Soviet nationality into Russian for a brief time. Many chose to remain as citizens of the CIS country they resided in. Many of them were born there and have had several generations in their family that were also the same case. In the case of the Latvia and Estonia, they restored their previous nationality laws and which many of the ethnic Russians were not given nationality automatically. There was and still remain a large number of Russians living in Latvia and Estonia on non-citizen or alien status status( Kolsto 1993) .

Following the dissolution of the USSR, The Russian Federation had to start taking in consideration the situation regarding its diaspora living in other places in the former CIS. The first measure towards compatriot policies started as the result from a speech in 1992, one of Yeltsin's Advisers Sergei Karaganov argued that Russian meddling in other countries within the CIS is justified if the human rights and livelihood of Russian compatriots are at risk. These ideas were dubbed as the "*Karaganov doctrine*" ( Vermulen 2014). Sergey Karaganov speculated that Russian speakers living in former CIS countries such as Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic state would become the enablers of political and economic influence the Russian federation has over its neighbors. He offered the first notion that Moscow would one day in the future need to put these ideas in act in order to protect them, the interests, and the people living in the former USSR.( Mackinnon 2014)

While this doctrine was only a speech in 1992, it put pressure on Boris Yeltsin to address some issues regarding the situation with Russian compatriots in determining the foreign policy of the new Russian Federation. One of the most

compelling issues regarding Russian compatriots was the onset with Russian separatism in Abkhazia and Dniester region of Moldova. This contributed to the development of Russia's near Abroad policy ( Vermeulen 2014) .When the Russian Foreign Policy concept of the Russian Federation" was first written 1993, it included an articles for protecting its compatriots abroad. Its subsequent editions in 2008, 2013 and 2016 included more article in regards to its compatriot policy. (Foreign policy doctrine of the Russian Federation)

A bill was launched in 1997 to the Russian Duma about the policy of compatriots. This provoked a lot of debate within Russia about who exactly constitutes as a compatriot, what rights should be afforded to them, and what provisions should be taken in order to grant these rights (Kallas 2016) The law was adopted in 1999 and gave a very broad definition on what constitutes as a compatriot *In a rather constructivist manner Article 3 stated that self-identification on the part of former citizens of the Soviet Union as compatriots of Russia would remain a matter of free choice ( Kallas 2016)* This gave an open interpretation to anyone living from the former soviet union to decide for themselves on how they wanted to align with the Russian Federation . These compatriot policies set the stage for the next major wave of compatriot policies which was the change in the Russian nationality laws in 2002.

On May 31st 2002, Russian adopted the Law of citizenship for the Russian Federation. ( Natoli 2010 ,391) This executive act from Vladimir Putin made a revolutionary step to bridging the divide between the Russian federation and the ethnic Russians living in CIS countries by changing in the requirements for obtaining Russian nationality. This simplified the procedure for obtaining Russian nationality for residents in the former CIS. Prior to the 2002 changes, the process by which a resident of an ex-Soviet *republic obtained Russian citizenship was "complex and involved repeated trips to Russian consulates ( Natoli 2010 391)* The 2002 laws lifted the 5 year residence requirement for many situations, a lot of them that which pertained to those living within former CIS countries. ( Salenko 2012)

Some of the changes in nationality laws also are rather selective. It was amended later that most of the requirements for Kyrgyzstan do not apply. An ethnic Russian Krygy must apply for Russian nationality within the Russian federation. (

ibid) Kyrgyzstan has roughly the same percentage of ethnic Russians as the Republic of Abkhazia.

## **4.2 .The geopolitical motives of Russia's compatriot policies**

### **4.2.1 The strategic motivations**

The liberalized nationality of policy of Russia as brought to attention with the international community with the Russian -Georgian war. The legality of distributing passports to residents of Abkhaz and South Ossetia came into legal question.

The Russian federation maintains the position that they are responsible for intervening when they feel Russian minorities are threatened. They settled for the “responsibility to protect” human rights doctrine and Medvedev stated that “*Russia would not allow anyone to compromise the lives and dignity of their citizens*” ( Natoli 2010) The Russian and Georgian war was based on the idea of protecting the national interests of Russian compatriots abroad in some narratives.

The same argument was used in the Russian conflicts with Ukraine. The Russians distributed passports to those living in a separatist region of Eastern Ukraine and illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. Legal experts on the topic of secessionism believe the compatriot policies that backed was just another pretext to give the Russian Federation attacking the territorial sovereignty of another nation. .

Jeffrey Mankoff argues that the Russian Federation has only never used these compatriot policies to intervene in their former CIS Central Asian Republic, where it is argued that Russian minorities have suffered more than they have than their fellow compatriots in countries like Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. Mankoff accuses the Russian Federation of using these interventions as an *opportunistic and strategic rather than having any concerns for humanitarian or ethnonational considerations.* ( Mankoff 64) The Russian federation states that their policies are only to defend Russian minority and other minorities that are threatened. The counter argument is that the Russian Federation made false allegations of the mistreatment of ethnic Russians as a pretext to justify its territorial expansion. These scenarios either lacked evidence or were widely inflated

However, looking at the nations that Russia chooses to intervene in are the ones with the same recurring themes. Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia were former CIS countries of greater strategic influence than countries such as Kazakhstan. The majority of the central Asian countries have joined the Eurasian Union or have expressed intent in doing so. It can also be noted that the newly formed central Asian were not at all interested in looking to the United States for their security. None of them had a color revolution except Kryrgyzstan . ( Trenin 133 2015) Trenin also goes on to state that the color revolutions “were a vivid demonstration of the precariousness of the U.S. connection.” It is also noted that the majority of Central Asian states are labeled as dictatorships and most of them score lower than Russia on freedom of press rating. A color revolution would be very difficult to achieve.

Realist John Mearsheimer argues that the Russian involvement in Ukraine and Georgia was a defensive reaction to encroachment policies pursued by the EU and NATO ( O toal ) He states that “*great powers are always sensitive when to great threats near their home country*”. Mearsheimer also gave the hypothetical scenario “*Imagine the American outrage if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico*“( Mearsheimer 2014) Moscow felt betrayed with NATO's eastern expansion. The turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century saw massive EU and NATO expansionism within CEE countries. It is commonly cited that NATO made a provision in 1993 that they would not “extend an inch east” ( RSF 2018)

Mearsheimer argues that the annexation in Crimea is because of the NATO expansionism in the east that has been going on since the 1990s (Mearsheimer 2014) . The extensive CEE accession into the European Union and NATO was likely “the last straw’ for NATO expansionism. The Russian Federation would not like see this expanded to any former soviet states

The former Warsaw pact countries and former CIS Baltic states made no delay in becoming integrated within these institutions. Despite the promise made by NATO not to move further east, these countries applied for membership immediately. Three of the Visegrad countries that were part of the competing Warsaw pact countries ( Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) became NATO members in 1999. (Van Harpen 2015)

One of the most concerned regions in Europe after the annexation of Crimea was within the Baltic States. In 2004, the 3 Baltic States Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia also joined along with the rest of the Warsaw pact nations in by NATP. The three Baltic States joined the EU in 2004 as well. (IBID) Interestingly enough, the Baltic states have significant ethnic Russian minority In Estonia and Latvia over a quarter of the inhabitants are ethnic Russians ( Puhl 2015) The Ethnic Russians Latvia is higher than in Ukraine. The Russian Federation did not invade the Baltic States following their NATO and EU accession in 2004 or before during their process of negotiations before despite that there is higher number of ethnic Russians living in Estonia and Latvia than there are in Georgia. The ethnic Russians in both countries have been discriminated against legally and institutionally since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As mentioned in the previous section, the citizenship laws in these Baltic States made it difficult for many ethnic Russians to obtain citizenship. The living standard for ethnic Russians in the Baltic States is significantly lower than it is for ethnic Estonian, Latvians and Lithuanians. Vladimir Putin used the “compatriot” excuse to intervene in Georgia and Ukraine, but didn’t a few years in behalf of the ethnic Russians in the Baltic States. The ethnic Russians living in the Baltic States have shown little interest in going to the Russian Federation even those that do not hold citizenship. Despite the rigid citizenship laws, programs from the European Union and the governments of these Baltic States have been implemented to integrate the Russian youth into these Baltic societies. The languages are introduced in schools. Most of the ethnic Russians that are not in possession of citizenship are the older generation. (Ibid)

The issue of Kaliningrad has been brought to attention and remains to be a topic of concern, especially for Lithuania. There has not been a real serious attempts to block Russian access to the exclave of Kaliningrad by a Western or Baltic state. (Person 2015) This could be an issue of contention later, but the Russian Federation is less likely to instigate anything with a country that is already in NATO. There is one thing to try to stop a country from becoming a member of NATO and it is another thing to try to stop one that already is a member (Ibid).

In comparison to CEE, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are still far from becoming fully integrated within the European Union or NATO. In order to join the alliance, candidates must fulfill a series of military, political, economic, and legal

criteria that have been outlined by NATO in separate membership action plans, or MAPs. (RFE) One does not become a member immediately. It is a similar case for the EU.

Ukraine and Georgia played an integral role in the Bucharest talks in 2008. The three are signatories for the EU's eastern partnership initiative and NATO's partnership for peace. Each of these countries have been given incentives to resolve their separatist conflicts. This is one of main motives for the Russian Federation in maintaining its position as a patron state to the separatists in Ukraine Moldova and Georgia.

In a paradoxical way of looking at the situation, the Russian Federation could be seen as dependent on Abkhazia and Transnistria as they dependent on Russia. If the Russian federation loses control of these territories and they become absorbed into their parent state, the Russian federation has once again lost more ground of their sphere of influence.

#### **4.2,2 Use of soft power mechanisms**

The Russian Federation implements mechanisms of soft power extensively not only in these separatist regions, but its entire near abroad scope. While the Russian Federation has only invaded and escalated separatist conflicts in several countries, it keeps a hold in its compatriots by soft power type resources. Joesph Nye defines soft power as institutions, ideas, values, culture, and the perceived legitimacy of policies, a positive "domestic mode ( Nye 2005).

The citizens of neighboring countries are addressed by a key narrative that they are centered around a concept called " Russiky Mir" which translates to " the Russian World". Russiky Mir is to include all that associate with Russian language and Culture. Russiky Mir was the result of a resurgence of ideas of Russia becoming the great civilization that was once prophesized by 19th century scholars Nikolai Danilevsky and Konstatine Leontiv . (Trenin 2009: 209) It also stems from Alexander Dugin's Eurasiansism. This concept serves as a focus for many different actors and

groups associated with Russia. It reflects Russia's geopolitical narrative to be seen as a global power and as a regional power, to be consulted about its immediate neighbors much of this narrative stems from grievances over being demoted to a lower position on the global stage after the cold war and seeking justice from perceived historical injustice.

The Russiky Mir foundation was founded in 2007. is heavily promoted by the Patriarch Kirill. (Trenin 2009:2010) .This paints the United States as a 'poacher *and intruder that has crossed all imaginary borders*' per Putin' speech in Munich in 2007. ( Ibid) One of the goals of Russiky Mir is to promote Alexander Dugin's concept of "Eurasian". The Russian Federation has created many NGOS to promote the Russian language, promote the human rights of compatriots, promote human rights and defend the interpretation of history. It functions within all the countries in its near abroad and the separatist areas and enables the Russian Federation to gain influence and supporters in these countries (Whitmore 2017)

The goal for these soft power tactics are to undermine the influence of the parent state of these separatist regions. The Russian federation also heavily subsidizes both Abkhaz and Transnistria media which will be touched on in greater detail in the following chapters about the case studies.

Whataboutism was a term that originated from the Soviet period to describe Soviet comments in pointing out hypocrisy in Western values and actions. (Economist 2008) For example, whenever the West would criticize the Soviet Union over issues such as human rights, the Soviets would respond with a statement that questioned racial relations in the United States. The comment never directly addressed the legitimacy of the criticism, but reverted the criticism by pointing out the hypocrisy of the criticism in the first place (Slobodchikoff and Davis 2017).

Russian news sources have started doing this again in the recent years. The Kosovo precedent mentioned in the previous chapter is a very common response when asked about the annexation of Crimea or supporting Abkhaz independence. . The US war in Iraq a commonly used topic as well when one makes a critical remark concerning Russian aggression

Whataboutism has given the Russian media a new strategy in spreading soft power and presenting the Russian argument to western hegemonic actions ( IBID)

#### **4.2.3 Limitations for the Russian Federation**

Gerald Toal raises a key point in *Near Abroad; Putin, The west and the Contest over Ukraine*. Toal states that these inherited conflicts did more than just give Russia influence over neighboring states, but matters were further complicated and caused various headaches “ *These territories became symbolic cause for Russian imperial nationalists and revisionists, though non ethnic Russian spaces, they were less imagined Russian geobody than Crimea, Northern Kazakhstan and Novyrussia..( Toal ;283)*

A large factor is the economic drain that these de facto states have on the Russian Federation. . The Russian Federation invests a lot of money in these frozen conflicts. The federation is also burdened with paying for the pensions to many of these so called citizens.

The situation with the Baltic States could be applied to the situation regarding Georgia and Moldova. The Russian Federation has a deeper interest in Ukraine than it does in Moldova or Georgia. In addition to focusing on the role the Russian Federation has on the state building in these de facto states , the case studies will also focus on what exactly does the Russian Federation have at stake in these de facto states and how much does the Russian Federation benefit by supporting these break away states.

## Chapter 5: Case study number 1: The Republic of Abkhazia



### 5.1 Basic history and Geopolitics

Abkhazia is a partially recognized republic located on the Black sea in between Georgia and Russia. The majority of countries recognize it as the area as the autonomous republic of Abkhazia belonging to Georgia. . ( UNPO profile 2017)

Following the Russian revolution, Georgia became its own independent republic in 1918. Abkhazia was absorbed into the independent Georgian republic but later on given autonomous status with the 1921 constitution. This ended only a few months later when Georgia was invaded by the Red Army in the same year. Abkhazia made an alliance with the Georgia Soviet Socialist Republic and agreed to be a treaty republic and established a military, financial and political union between the two. Both Abkhazia and Georgia joined the Federative Union of Soviet

Socialist Republics of Transcaucasia on March 12nd 1922. (George 2009) The two were on equal footing and relations were rather positive. This was a short lived era. The Transcaucasian SFSR was broken up in 1931 by Josef Stalin.

The break-up of the Federative Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of Transcaucasia can be seen as the exact same “divide and conquer” method that Russia still uses today to maintain a presence in its near abroad. Abkhazia was downgraded to Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic under Georgia’s SSR. Under Stalin’s orders and forced Georgianization of the area, the relations would become quickly strained throughout the duration of the Soviet Union. The Georgians placed themselves at a higher culture which put the other minorities at a disadvantage ( Toft 2004)

The relations between Georgia and Abkhazia became more strained right before the dissolution of the Soviet Union and independence of Georgia. Georgian nationalist policies following the dissolution of the Soviet Union alienated the Abkhaz. They sent letter to Moscow protesting the status of Abkhazia, but Moscow was too entangled in their own affairs ( Ibid) The collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in a bloody war from 1992-994 between the new nationalist government of Aviaid Gamsakhurdia and the secessionist movements in Abkhazia. The death toll was in the tens of thousands and many were forced to flee. Russia at the time played an ambiguous role to where it would play to both sides, but ended up siding with Abkhazia as events unfolded. ( Fischer 45-46)

A ceasefire between the two was reached on May 14th 1994 in Moscow. The provisions of the cease fire were that a heavily armed security zone was created separating the two in there was a peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of independent states with the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia assisting. ( United Nations Security Council 2-3) . The situation remained rather stagnant but not entirely frozen either. The conflict once again heat up with the Saakashvili presidency.

The 2003 Rose revolution in Georgia and Saakashvili's presidency gave Georgia a desire to look more to Western institutions such as the NATO and the EU. This fueled a drive in Saakashvili to reunify Georgia as fast as possible. ( Fisher 2016 ) Georgia started making efforts to join NATO in 2005 by signing the Partnership for Peace . Provisions of the signing of this treaty was that the host nation would support and aid the transit of NATO forces and personnel. The

discussion for NATO enlargement intensified at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008. The allies met together to discuss Ukraine and Georgia's NATO's Membership Action Plan. ( Asmus 2010 Chapter 4). This brought a heated discussion among the allies. The allies were hoping they could tiptoe around the discussion without upsetting Moscow too much. Obviously this was not the case. Putin expressed his disappointment at the following NATO-Russia council. The Russian Federation was already strengthening ties with the separatist territories but stated “ *Moscow didn't have intention of recognizing Abkhazia and South Osettia* ( Ibid) Putin issued a decree right after the Bucharest summit that instructed Russian government authorities to cooperate with the de facto authorities in Abkhazia ( Van Harpen 2016) Russia engaged in 6 day a war with Georgia from August 8<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> which resulted in the Russia recognition of Abkhazia and South Osettia.

Abkhazia today has a population of 240,000. The ethnic make-up of Abkhazia is: Abkhaz 50.71%, Armenian 17.39%, Georgian 17.93%, Russian 9.17% ( UNPO). They are still heavily supported by the Russian Federation. However the provided over the past nine years has failed to drive the Abkhaz economy or reduce unemployment, currently estimated at 70 percent. ( Fuller 2017)

Abkhazia has its own de facto government. They have achieved several aspects of state building, but the issue with gaining recognition with other states and developing many alliances with anyone except the Russian Federation holds them from any further state building. In addition to the Russian Federation, the Republic of Abkhazian is only recognized by three other UN member states (Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Nauru) They also have recognition from the the other de facto states in the post-soviet sphere .They even hosted the “ unrecognized world cup” in 2014 which consisted of 12 teams from different de facto states and autonomous regions. ( Walker 2016)

The Russian Federation opened an embassy in 2017 in Sukhumi. The opening was attended by Sergey Lavrov. ( Tamkin 2017) Because of they are unrecognized by most of the world, the majority of residents in Abkhazia hold Russian Nationality. Despite being more advanced in their state building than the PMR, the residents of the territory suffer more problems with international isolation.

## 5.2 The Relationship with the Russian Federation since the annexation of Crimea

### 5.2.1 The General Consensus

The Abkhaz viewed the annexation of Crimea as generally positive. They were happy for the Crimean and Russian people. The deputy to the foreign ministry of Abkhazia stated that we consider the joining of Crimea to Russia a legitimate process. The return of Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia took place exclusively at the request of the people. ( Formal Interview Abkazia)

The questions after Crimea started to come all over the world wondering on what would be the next territory annexed by the Russian Federation, Abkhazia came to mind with many in the possibility of what could be next. In a study conducted within by Geard Toal and John O'Loughlin in 2009 and 2010 within Abkhazia, it was shown that when given an option of their political preference. 80% choose to be an independent country, while only 20% wanted to be annexed by the Russian Federation (Toal 2014). The deputy to the foreign ministry also maintained that there are no plans to be integrated into the Russian Federation ( Formal Interview Abkhazia) The deputy added that *“the people of Abkhazia determined the destiny of their state in two referendums (26th of November 1994 and 3th of October 1999) on the status of the Republic of Abkhazia. The choice of the absolute majority of citizens approved the Constitution, with intentions to build an independent and sovereign state.”*

Toal explains that the situation in Abkhazia than Transnistria or South Ossetia is different because of the ethnic Abkhaz power structure within Abkhazia. It is only possible for an ethnic Abkhaz to be president for example ( Caspersen 2008) . While there have been developments on a potential referendum for South Osetia to be annexed into the Russian Federation , the prime minister asserted that this would not happen under his watch *Abkhazia will remain an “independent state”, and also “loyal ally of great Russia.”*( Balmforth 2016). In the same survey though it was reported that the overwhelming majority of Abkhaz would also like the Russian Federation to keep troops within its territory (Ibid). This was confirmed again in 2014 when Russia created a treaty that enabled a joint Russian-Abkhaz military force. According to the

ministry of foreign affairs, there are more than 160 interstate agreements have been signed between the Republic of Abkhazia and the Russian Federation covering practically all areas of cooperation.( Interview 2 Foreign Ministry 2018) . The deputy of the foreign ministry followed up this statistic by stating “Since *the recognition of Abkhazia in 2008, Russia acts as a guarantor of its security and in every way contributes to the recognition of Abkhazia in the international arena.*”.

The Republic of Abkhazia underwent a nationalist revolution in of its own in 2014. On May 27 2014 demonstrators stormed the presidential administration building in Sukhumi ousting President Alexander Ankvab .( Reuters 2014) Russian presidential aid Vladislav Surkov assisted in the negotiations of each side. One of the biggest criticisms of Ankvab was that he was giving out Abkhaz passports to ethnic Georgians. The then opposition leader Raul Khajimba criticized this as a way to sway the results of the future elections. Raul Khajimba was elected in August 2014 as president. Public dissatisfaction with President Alexander Ankvab government had been growing for some time due to an ailing economy and allegations of public corruption.( Source) Khajimba was the candidate that the Russian federation backed in the previous Abkhaz elections.

### **5.2.2 Russian and Abkhaz treaties 2014 and 2016**

Seven months following the annexation of Crimea, Russia made a treaty with the Republic of Abkhazia on November 24th 2014. The motivation of the treaty was to strengthen the military and economic alliance between Russia and the Republic of Abkhazia. Under this treaty, Abkhazia promised to synchronize its domestic and foreign policy to Russia’s while Putin promised over 270 million dollars in subsidies to the Abkhazia. ( Harding 2014))

The document also called for a shift of the Abkhazia and Russian border to the Injuri river which divides Abkhazia from Georgia. It gave Moscow permission to secure joint control of Abkhaz and Georgian border of the movement of people, cargo, and transport in Abkhaz customs. ( Janasia 2014) Before this there was no

physically defined natural border with Abkhazia and Georgia, which is one of the requirements to form a country.

There was a mixed reception with the treaty in 2014. President Paul Khadzimba added that “*Ties with Russia offer us full security guarantee*” (Harding 2014). The agreement followed with some contention and debate among Abkhaz that felt that parts of it were infringing on their autonomy. Thomas De Waal explained in an interview with UNPO that for the Abkhaz political elite there was too many components regarding “integration” which is something they did not really want and against everything they fought for. (De Waal 2014). He pointed out that in the Russian version, “integration” envisaged the merging of Abkhaz and Russian military structures, “joint control” of anything and anyone crossing Abkhazia’s borders and an “agreed foreign policy.” Article 14 called for encouraging and simplifying the procedures whereby citizens of one Party to the Treaty acquire the citizenship of the other Party to the Treaty, something that would have allowed Russians to acquire Abkhaz citizenship and thus acquire property in Abkhazia. The Abkhaz elite more avid proponents for changing the term “Integration” to “strategic partnership”. Waal speculates that the Armenian and Russian minorities were less opposed. Another updated draft was given in 2015 that removed some of the unpopular provisions (Freedom House 2016)

The United States along with the EU refused to acknowledge and recognize this treaty. The Georgians viewed this as an attack by Russia on their internal territorial integrity. The treaty was ratified once again in November of 2016, The Russian State Duma ratified an agreement on a joint Russian-Abkhazian joint force. As Head of the State Duma Committee for CIS Affairs, Eurasian Integration and Contacts with Compatriots Leonid Kalashnikov said, the agreement “provides the common fundamentals of the Russian-Abkhazian defense and security space” (Kremlin RU 2016)

The agreement allows for Russia to have control within the time for war and also allows for developing a Russian base in Abkhazia along with motorized Abkhaz infantry battalions, and artillery and aviation groups. This angered Tbilisi and added more tensions to the ongoing problems with Abkhazia. The US State Department maintained that this agreement wasn’t valid under international law. (RFE 2016) Georgia and the majority of the international community saw this also as another step towards annexation.

### **5.2.3 2014 Abkhaz property law**

The republic of Abkhazia does not allow foreigners that reside there to own property. This includes citizens of the Russian Federation and foreigners with a residence permit. There was an attempt bill produced by a Pro-Russian parliament member Almas Djapua to allow Russians to own property. This was met more contempt and resulted in having his car blown up. Djuapa was left unhurt. (Balmforth 2016 )

The debate of allowing Russians to own property remains to be a divided subject within Abkhazia. The Republic of Abkhaz appreciate the number of Russian tourists, but a lot of them feel that if Russians were to own property that this would enable too much influence. They also fear for the protection of properties. The other side feels Abkhazia would benefit from an influx on Russian investors. Russian investors would help the Republic of Abkhazia economically. This further isolates the Republic of Abkhazia from its main support system. The annexation of Crimea and property laws of the Republic of Abkhazia could cause those potential Russian investors to invest in other places such as Crimea or elsewhere.

### **5.2.4 Russian tourism in the Republic of Abkhazia since the annexation of Crimea**

One issue that left the Abkhaz slightly fearful following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 was the concern of losing tourism to the newly annexed territory. Many Russians in the year 2015 decided to go to Crimea for the summer as their patriotic duty (Fischer 2016). Abkhazia has one million Russian tourists visit Abkhazia every year .The number actually increased in 2016. The reason for this increase can be accredited to the strained relations with the West have and the declining value of the Russian ruble. ( Balm forth 2016) In addition, the lack of tourists going to Turkey and Egypt has contributed to the rise in tourism from

Russians. The local tourism industry has bet on this as a trend that will continue into the future and is rapidly building more private hotels to satisfy demand. The infrastructure and service are not as up as other places, but it still provides for a nice cheap holiday for the less wealthy Russians. (European Council of Foreign Relations 2016)

Abkhazia has a deep history with Russian tourism. Abkhazia was a very popular holiday destination for the Soviet elite. Vtandil Gartskiya, the region's self-appointed tourism minister, says foreign visitors are the "locomotive" of the local economy. He added that every year the area sees a rise in 20% in tourism. ( Balmforth 2016). While the property ownership laws are an issue for foreign investors in Abkhazia, it has not suffered as much. Although the dramatic rise ceased in 2017 with rapprochement with turkey this caused the number of Russians visiting Abkhazia in May-July 2017 was 30 percent lower than last year, when the number had reached 1.1 million by early September ( Fuller 2017).

In the years following the annexation, the economy of Crimea has suffered from the lack of private investors. Most of the investments and growth come from Kremlin subsidies. ( Alikin 2017) Alikan states in his report that unfair treatment of the authorities also cause investors to alienated. The foreign sanctions have not helped Crimea either. Ordinary Crimeans complain that after being incorporated into Russia, they saw prices double and incomes dry up as vacationers, especially from Ukraine, stayed away. Deliveries of supplies from the Ukrainian mainland were cut, making the region of 2.3 million almost entirely dependent on shipments by ferry from Russia. ( NPR 2018) Crimea has had a decline in tourism and this decline is predicted to stay. Despite the fears of Turkey, Turkey still received a fair amount of tourists from Russia. While the number of tourists to Abkhazia has increased, it might not stay that way. There has been a rise in the crime rate on account of several factors mostly relating to the unemployment rate and aggressive nationalist rhetoric. There were a couple of murders of Russian tourists in the last couple of years ( Fuller 2017). The Russian federation has pledged to send 10 million tourists to Crimea in 2019. (Sharkov 2016) Such a drive by the Russian government to see more tourists in Crimea instead of other places could put a strain on the Republic of Abkhazia as Abkhazia does not see as many tourists that are not Russian. Most foreigners usually need to have a double entry Russian visa to enter Abkhazia from the Russian side. It

is not impossible to enter on the Georgian side, but it is rather complex and time consuming. (Abkhaz foreign ministry)

The Republic of Georgia has seen a major growth in their tourism industry in the recent years (Georgian journal 2018) Georgia has a very easy visa regime and many nationalities are given visa free access or have the option of getting an E visa. (Georgian ministry of interior) Tourism from the Russian Federation still continues to increase despite the rift over the occupied territories. Over a million Russian citizens visited the Republic of Georgia in 2017 and they still make up for the 3<sup>rd</sup> spot in tourism to Georgia. It is also noted that this study has been a major increase of tourists from EU countries in the last years. (Georgian journal 2018) While Abkhazia tourism industry has benefited since the annexation of Crimea, the long term forecast for Russian tourism has too many uncertainties. The Abkhaz property law and determination to send more tourists to Crimea from the Russian Federation could be a potential setback for Abkhazia in the future.

### **5.2.5 Abkhaz Russia Joint Military force**

In November of 2016, The Russian state дума ratified an agreement on a joint Russian-Abkhazian joint force. As Head of the State Duma Committee for CIS Affairs, Eurasian Integration and Contacts with Compatriots Leonid Kalashnikov said, the agreement "provides the common fundamentals of the Russian-Abkhazian defense and security space" ( TASS 2016)

The agreement allows for Russia to have control within the time for war and also allows for developing a Russian base in Abkhazia along with motorized Abkhaz infantry battalions, and artillery and aviation groups. This angered Tbilisi and added more tensions to the ongoing problems with Abkhazia. The US state department maintained that this agreement wasn't valid under international law. ( RFE 2016) Georgia and the majority of the international community saw this also as another step towards annexation.

### **5.2.6 2017 European Union visa liberalization for Georgia**

Despite the Abkhaz nationalist movement and discriminating policies the made against the Gali Georgians, the Georgian government made a statement that was an attempt to try to reach a compromise with the Abkhaz in the early part of 2017. Shortly

after the announcement of EU visa liberalization for the Republic of Georgia, The Republic of Georgia said it would offer the option to those residing in the Republic of Abkhazia and South Ossetia the option of obtaining a Georgian passport. Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze added *“the visa free travel will also be important to Georgian citizens living in the occupied regions, giving them a chance to benefit from visa liberalization and close ties with the European Union. (UNPO 2017)*

The Abkhaz foreign ministry denounced this as a *trap by Tbilisi*. The Russians retaliate immediately by making promises to negotiate with the European Union to not block passports for Abkhaz citizens (Lomsasze 2017) .There has been very little progress made on this development. There are also no reports that can be found on the number of Abkhaz citizens that have made the effort to obtain a Georgian passport for the sole purpose of the fact it makes things more convenient for them and helps ease the problems many Abkhaz have with isolation. However the de facto foreign ministry gave this statement *“We regard the statement of Mikheil Janelidze as yet another crude attempt of Tbilisi authorities to “entice” citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia in the political and legal sphere of Georgia. It is clear that following the complete failure of the so-called “neutral passports” (UNPO 2017)* The ministry stated that people in the territories are able to travel all over the world thanks to their Russian passport and their isolation problems are a result of the Republic of Georgia and western counterparts.

Some of the countries in the EU have a reputation for refusing to grant visas for Abkhaz and South Osettians that apply at consulates based on their Russian nationality. There was a controversial case in 2009 where the German consulate delayed giving a visa to a sick Abkhaz boy based on the premise that he must go to the consulate to Tbilisi to apply (Georgia times 2009) There have been other such cases reported with various students, football players and other professions having their Schengen visas denied due to the basis that some European Union countries insist that visa applications must be applied for within the applicant's country of residence. Because of the unrecognized status of Abkhazia, this means they must apply for their Schengen visa from the embassy in Tbilisi instead of Moscow.

When the deputy of the Republic of Abkhazia was asked *“In 2017 the Republic of Georgia was given visa-free access to the European Union has had any effect on how the republic of Abkhazia conducts its overall foreign policy?”* “. He followed with

the same notion. He replied with *“The authorities of Georgia have repeatedly tried to &quot;involve&quot; the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia in the political and legal space of Georgia. The last such attempt is connected with the abolition of the visa regime between Georgia and the European Union, when Georgian officials stated that the visa-free regime will also act for so-called &quot;residents of the occupied territories&quot;. Naturally, such a political trap, like many previous ones, failed miserably. The abolition of the visa regime between Georgia and the European Union applies exclusively to the citizens of Georgia, and does not apply to the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia.*

The Russian deputy retaliated by saying that the European Union should also start accepting visa applications from residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and lifting its restrictions of them. He said he would try to raise the matter in Brussels. (Lomzade 2017) Both the Abkhaz and Russian position on this that if the Republic of Georgia wants to really help the Abkhaz, they should revoke the law of Georgia on occupied territories that was created in 2008(Ibid)

### **5.2.7 Russian soft power in Abkhazia**

Abkhazia still continues to suffer from many problems over its isolation from the rest of the International community. The deputy of the foreign ministry blames it on the west. He believes that there is an information war is being fought against Abkhazia. He went on to state that *“Georgia and its Western partners are trying in every possible way to isolate the citizens of Abkhazia from communicating with the outside world, trying to draw Abkhazia back into the political fold of Georgia by using soft power, which further complicates the recognition process.”* (Interview 1 MFA ABkhazia). The Russian Federation as a higher position of soft power in the Republic of Abkhazia than any other power.

The Russian media outlets in Abkhazia play a role in keeping the conflict instigated. Abkhazia scores remarkably higher on press ratings than the PMR but it is still relatively low. Freedom house gives Abkhazia a score of 40/100 and rates of Abkhazia as partly free. The Russian media has a high penetration in the Republic of

Abkhazia. It established a Sputnik channel in the Republic of Abkhazia at the end of 2014. World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers The Media Sustainability report for the year 2016 by IREX mentioned that Russia's influence in the region is growing, and its impact on Abkhazia's media landscape is evidenced by the fact that "because of Russia's huge influence and interference no media representatives broadcast anything in Abkhazian language" (IREX 2016)

Russian media does have the upper hand in the republic of Abkhazia. Local journalists say it is very difficult for them to compete with well-funded and well-produced Russian newspapers, given how small and underfunded the local outlets are. The salary difference between the Russian agency and a local newspaper can be up to seven-fold, according to an editor. Komsomolskaya Pravda is printed in color and given out for free – something local papers feel is unfair competition. Some journalists said the legislation should be overhauled to create a level playing field for local media, which should benefit from economic support. The state news agency Apsny press provides official coverage; a professional alternative is available through the private news agency Abkhazia-Info. The Russian state-run news agency Sputnik is also active in Abkhazia. (Hammerburg and Gromoso 2017)

Russian culture maintains a presence in many aspects of Abkhazian life. Russian television is highly influential throughout Abkhazia, and has contributed to making Russian the main language for receiving foreign news. The older generation of Abkhaz have a Soviet background, meaning that they feel closely allied to Russia. A significant number of young people have left home to attend Russian universities. (Achba 2016) Although the latter can be attributed to the fact the Russian Federation is the only recognized country they are able to study in.

### **5.2.8. Economic support to the Republic of Abkhazia since 2014**

The Russian federation supports the republic of Abkhazia by giving it subsidies. The Russian federation invests into the Republic of Abkhazia by a tenfold more than the EU (De Waal 2017). The Russian Federation has allocated about 37 billion rubles to Abkhazia in 2009-2016. The year 2015 had a major drop in subsidies, but had a major increase again in 2016. (Kolovksy 2017) There was a promise for more in the future. Moscow intends to invest 6 billion rubles (\$101 million) in Abkhazia between

now and 2019. ( Fuller 2018) Although there was a cut in direct financial aid in 2017 2.58 billion rubles from 7.7 billion in 2016. ( IBID)

The Russian Federation also supports Abkhazia economically by being its number one trading partner. ( Gerrits/Bader 2015) Russian aid to Abkhazia is a very critical uncertainty for the future. It has been up and down in the last four years.

### **5.3 Factors of Linkage and Leverage : Republic of Abkhazia**

The two strongest factors of linkage the Russian Federation has with Abkhazia that it also uses as leverage for the Republic of Georgia is the intergovernmental and information linkage. Establishing a joint military cooperation on what is legally Georgian territory is the ultimate form of leverage .The intergovernmental agreements made with Abkhazia and the Russian Federation undermining the territorial integrity. Tbilisi and the Western institutions have called it an attempt on annexation.

The information linkage is the second strongest, simply because of the isolation issue the Republic of Abkhazia has. The flow of information from competing spheres of influence have a difficult time penetrating Abkhazia. Virtually all of the media within the Republic of Abkhazia is either Abkhaz or Russian media. Any attempt from Tbilisi to make any amends is immediately discredited and dismissed within the media.

The economic linkage with Abkhazia is not as strong in creating leverage for the Republic of Georgia. The economic linkage with Abkhazia causes more leverage with Abkhazia than it does for the Republic of Georgia. It creates a one sided dependency on the Russian Federation.

The social linkage is the weaker linkage factors. The social linkage that Abkhazia has with the Russian Federation isn't that strong. They might be citizens, but they don't consider themselves Russian and most Russians do not really consider them as such. They are able to travel to Russia and study in Russia. The nationality laws also for people in this territory stipulate that they have to go to the

Russian Federation to acquire the nationality ( Achba 2016). This does not really put much leverage on the Republic of Georgia. It is the converse. Since the Republic of Georgia has been given free access to the European Union, it has used this as a way to bargain with Abkhaz by offering to let residents of Abkhazia and south Ossetia obtain Georgian nationality in order to take advantage.

#### **5.4 Conclusion for case 1**

The answer to the first question in regards to Abkhazia is that yes there has been a minor affect. There was no annexation or a forecasted annexation of Abkhazia. There has been a small effect. There has been a small development in Abkhaz-Russian relations. The Abkhaz remained supportive of the annexation, they asserted that they would not want to be annexed themselves and kept a distance from the discussion afterwards (Fischer 2016).

The republic of Abkhazia shortly after the annexation strengthened Abkhaz nationalist policies both internally and externally. They did make an alliance treaty, but this was out of security. But their strong stance on not allowing Russians to purchase property is a key indicator they do not want too much of a presence in their de facto state. The measures are not aggression towards Russia, but it does reveal a small amount of skepticism. The revisions that have been made to the Russian-Abkhaz treaty are also an indicator of this. Thomas de Waal states that Abkhazia is quite problematic for the Russian Federation. He stated ‘ the widespread perception in Russia that the Abkhaz are "ungrateful" for Moscow's military and financial investment in the republic. (De Waal 2015)

The different with the Republic of Abkhazia and the PMR is that the Abkhaz have their own ethnic identity which is unique from the Russian Federation. The Abkhaz see the Russian Federation as a helpful benefactor and an important alliance to have. However, they do not share the same ethnic kinship with Russians that other separatist regions in the former CIS like the PMR does. The Russian minority is not a member of the ruling party. They only identify as Russians in the legal sense and out of necessity. . The Abkhaz foreign ministry also backed this up with stating that joining Russia is nowhere on the Abkhaz agenda. The deputy also concluded this statement with “*The people of Abkhazia determined the destiny of their state in two referendums (26th of November 1994 and 3th of October 1999) on the status of the*

*Republic of Abkhazia. The choice of the absolute majority of citizens approved the Constitution, with intentions to build an independent and sovereign state.*" (Interview 2 Abkhaz foreign ministry 2018)

One of the biggest uncertainties for the Republic is the economic support given from the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation could alienate the Republic of Abkhazia by pulling some of its economic support to the region. The relationship with Georgia could improve in the future. Western institutions such as NATO and the EU have placed Georgia on a lower priority than it was in 2008. Andre Gerrits and Max Bader state *"Russian economic and intergovernmental linkage with Abkhazia and South Ossetia has created a strong one-sided dependence. Russia does not stand to lose much, except for reputation costs and possibly a weaker position towards Georgia, were the linkages with Abkhazia and South Ossetia to break down ( Gerrit 2015).* This is exactly what was found in examining the intergovernmental agreements and economic support from 2014-2015.

This leads into the second question and hypotheses. Russia's rule as a patron state to Abkhazia prevents Abkhazia from becoming an independent state. Abkhazia remains isolated from much of the rest of the world. There has been little done in the direction of being able to facilitate relations with other states including the parent state. Putin stating that Abkhazia does not need to be recognized by anyone but Russia does not help advance its state building. It hinders and prolongs the status quo as much as the unwillingness of Georgia to compromise on the issue or other country's refusal to formally recognize them.

The lack of compromise the de facto government of Abkhazia has with the Russian Federation also puts itself at risk and makes the situation counter-productive. Abkhazia desires Russian support for many things, but doesn't want any interference in governing their state. They want the subsidies and Russian tourist money, but won't even Russians to buy property. Abkhazia could run the risk in alienating the Russian Federation and therefore losing its 'insurance policy'. This is dangerous position to have when Russian Federation has more important priorities such as the situation in Crimea. To have only one country as a strategic ally is poor strategy for the Republic of Abkhazia. Thomas de Waal argues a point with a paradoxical conclusion. He believes that any progress in state building with the Republic of Abkhazia has to be done with the Republic of Georgia. It is up to the

Republic of Georgia to assist in this process and not the Russian Federation. (De waal 2015) He added that *“A stronger more "sovereign" Abkhazia will keep open its options in the future for making arrangements and cutting deals with Tbilisi, while an Abkhazia that is basically absorbed into Russia - and in which Russians acquire land and property - will be completely lost and alien to Georgia.* The best solution would be for Georgia to help integrate Abkhazia into the outside world on a “status neutral basis”. While Georgia could also be more receptive to their cause, they did make the effort in 2017 with offering residents in the “occupied territories” to have Georgia passports. This was swiftly rejected. If all sides are willing to make no further compromises, Abkhazia will remain in complete deadlock for many more generations. The issue with international isolation will also cripple their quest in obtaining International recognition. While the blame is set on the parent state of Georgia and the western institutions. The Russian federation plays a role of keeping Abkhazia isolated by acting as its patron. . A compromise must be reached if they want to achieve international recognition that goes beyond half a dozen of countries. It is essential for them in their state building process. While and this won't happen without any kind of compromise with Tbilisi.

To answer the sub question “Does the Russian Federation benefit from the status quo of unrecognized states”, the answer is yes, but the benefit is not worth the hassle and slowly becoming more of a burden.

## Chapter 6: Case study 2 Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic



### 6.1 History and Geopolitics of the PMR

The PMR (better known as Transnistria) was one of the first independent republics of the Soviet Union, yet it remains unrecognized by every member state of the world including its patron state Russia. Transnistria declared itself separate from Soviet Moldova in 1990. Its motives for separating was based on the fear of Moldova reuniting with Romania after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The cluster of Slavic speakers in the eastern region between the Dniester River and Ukraine wanted to remain its allegiance with the Soviet Union ( Cojocaró 2006) . The transition conflict was provoked both by ethnic Russians leading the stride for Tiraspol secessionist movements while ethnic Moldovan nationalists were driving the force to suppress them (Bowers 2002)

The conflict between Moldova and Transnistria ignited into a war in March of 1992. The fighting continued until July 21<sup>st</sup> 1992 when a ceasefire was reached. The death toll was estimated to be around several hundred deaths. This was seen as very tame on the international scale compared to other ongoing separatist wars happening in the Caucuses and the Balkans in that year. The provisions of the

ceasefire consisted on ceasefire created a joint peacekeeping force consisting of five Russian battalions, three Moldovan battalions, and two PMR battalions. This force does some governance, but Transnistria does its own governance for the most part. It has remained as a defect state since 1992, while recognized internationally as part of Moldova (Kramer 2016).

It is widely debated of whether or not Transnistrian separatism is based on ethnicity or ideology. The more popular accepted theory is that the PMR was not founded based on ethnicity which makes it unique in comparison with other separatist conflicts going on at the time such as the wars in the Balkans and conflicts with other current states like Nagorno Karabakh and Abkhazia. According to leadership of Transnistria, the entity was democratically founded, by a citizen referendum to protect minority rights. And the future will become democratic too." (Caspersen 2008). Most scholars say the conflict was political and ideological. The secessionist movement motive were to restore communism in a renewed Soviet Union. (Simon 1994)

When reading the constitution, of the PMR, Transnistria asserts itself as a multinational Republic. *Article 43 in the Transnistrian constitution states "Everybody has the right to maintain his ethnicity, as well as nobody can be forced to name and indicate his ethnicity. Insult of national dignity should be punished as provided by law. Everybody has the right to use his mother tongue and to choose a language of communication."* (Ministry of Foreign affairs of the PMR Webpage). In this aspect separatism was not ethnically based, but ideologically.

There are also those that believe that the conflict was also ethnic. The main argument given is that the conflict was largely over high emotive and ethnic symbols and both sides were engaged in sympathies for their ethnic kin in Romania and Russia. This resulted as a fuel to a nationalistic fire which would cause an intervention to the conflict. It would cause the escalation of Moldova and cause nationalistic backlash in both Russia and Romania to fade. (Bowers and Kaufman 1998) Kolsto and Malign add that "The fact that just because the people of Moldova did not succumb to the bloody conflict in Yugoslavia or the Caucasus does not mean that the conflict was not ethnic"

The PMR asserted that Moldova was endangering their linguistic freedom and one of the main principles of the PMR was freedom to use whichever language one pleases. The PMR has not entirely lived up to this by how they have managed their education system and language policy. The Transnistria have not given the same freedoms to ethnic Moldovans living in the PMR that they demanded from Moldova.

The MEP of the Transnistrian Supreme Soviet in 2002 issued a decree to the ministry of Education to begin the closure of Romanian language pre-university institutions in Transnistria before the opening of the next school year ( Roper 510). They used vague reasoning stating that it was due to the failure of these language institutions to obtain licenses and accreditation. In addition the minister of education stressed that “ideology and content of the humanities taught in schools do not correspond to the education policy of Transnistria” This has caused nothing but backlash and schism with Moldova. It was widely criticized as “ nothing less than a linguistic cleansing” by Ekeus in a OSCE Press release.

The EU and US placed a ban on the ten officials responsible for the closures from entering. While Russia was slightly critical of these closures, they relayed most of their criticism to Moldova( I bid ) There has been little resolved since then regarding these closures. There is also widespread concern that ethnic Moldovans undergo widespread discrimination by law enforcement (Freedom house 2016).

### **6.1.2 The PMR today**

Transnistria has a population of slightly more than half a million. The ethnic makeup is almost even between Moldovan, Ukrainians, and Russians. The statistics of the population are often disputed according to the Moldovan ambassador to the Czech Republic. He believes the official census given by the PMR is skewed. He says the number is likely to be less. The Republic of Moldova says the best indicator of the real number can be acquired is by examining the “flow of goods”.

There have been attempted talks called the 5+2 talks supervised by the OSCE, Russia and Ukraine but they have not been effective. ( BBC 2016 ) Since the ceasefire in 1992, there has been a little resolved in the change of the situation. Russian peacekeeping forces remain in Transnistria. The Russian federation spends \$ 1 billion towards Transnistria every year. (Beusher 2016) The Russian gas company Gazprom supplies gas to Transnistria, but uses their debt which is currently over 4 billion USD to influence Moldovan politics (Kramer 2016)

Transnistria also is very autocratically run. They have a lower rating on freedom of the press than Abkhazia. Most of the media is state owned and insulting the leadership is forbidden ( Freedom house 2016) Transnistria is run by an autocratic elite. The company *Sherrif* is private holding company run by a Russian elite and has a monopoly or different industries in the PMR from supermarkets, gas stations, telephone providers, the media, and even a football team. ( Ibid) From 1991 until 2011, the PMR was run by a Moscow backed oligarch named Igor Smirnov. In the Smirnov era from 1991-2011, there was a mass privatization of every industry within the PMR. ( Balmaceda 2013) There were many allegations made towards the misuse of Russian aid. Margarita Balmaceda explains that “ *Given the general lack of transparency and accountability in Transnistria, however, it is hard to ascertain how much of the income from privatization went to support the state budget, and how much of it benefitted private actors able to take advantage of insider knowledge and corruption opportunities (Balmaceda 2013).* The situation has remained more or less the same since the change, there is just more competition among these oligarchs.

The PMR has a problem with trafficking of all kinds and smuggling between the Moldovan and Ukrainian border( Popescu 2008) The recent collaborations with Moldova and Ukraine under the supervision of EUROBAM to secure the borders have relieved parts of this issue but not to its entirety. (EUROBAM 2017)

Transnistria has sent several requests to join the Russian Federation. One of the key requests was a referendum conducted in 2006. The residents were asked to choose between integration with Moldova or independence and further integration with Russia. 96,61% voted against integration with Moldova, while 98,07% voted for “independence” and future joining to Russia ( Vlas 2016). A large part of the international community rejected this referendum. The U.S State department issued an official statement stating “*The U.S. does not recognize the independence referendum held yesterday in the Transnistrian region of Moldova. We welcome similar statements rejecting the referendum by the European Union, member states, and the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.*” ( State Department 2006) The popular opinion of potential annexation into Russian territory remains. In the same studies conducted by Toal and O’Loughlin in

2009, it was shown that that many Transnistria would prefer unification with Russia.( Toal O' Loughlin 2012)

Russia did little response the referendum in 2006. There was too much hope that Moldova would join the Eurasian Economic Union. However, in 2012. Putin was quoted by saying "Transnistria was entitled to self-determination" to a summer camp group. The same year he reappointed Dmitry Rogozin to the post of special representative of the Russian President for Transnistria. ( Van Harpen 2015)

## 6.2 Russian - PR relations since the Crimea annexation

### 6.2.1 General consensus

The majority of Transnistrian viewed Russia's annexation of Crimea as a positive thing. The Transnistrian were hopeful that this would unfreeze the status quo and allow them to join the Russian Federation. Transnistrian foreign minister welcome the annexation of Crimea and pointed parallels with the Transnistrian referendum and the Crimean referendum (Buescher 2016). The PMR deputy to the foreign ministry of the PMR said he supported the annexation and recognized Crimea as Russia and cited the 2006 referendum. When confronted with the subject of Moscow denying the subsequent request 2014 and the fact the Russian Federation does not even recognize the PMR, his response was *"It must be more appropriate to address the question when Russia will officially recognize the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic to our Russian counterparts. At the same time, it is obvious that this question should be considered taking into account the current geopolitical situation, which today is objectively rather complicated. Nevertheless, it tends to change. The USSR was not recognized by the international community, at first, just like the US. You can recall Kosovo, Abkhazia, South Ossetia. There are many examples."* ( Formal Interview PMR 2017)

While the majority share the same sentiment about this, there is a slight generational and educational divide in the subject. *Not everybody wants to, the answer really varies and it often varies to class and education level. The more educated do not want it to be. It is fine just as an autonomous area of Moldova"* said

a subject interviewed that is from Transnistria but has since relocated to the Russian Federation. (Informal Interview subject 3) Another subject interviewed who was a part time resident in the PMR said the same thing. *“That is never going to happen It would be best if the Transnistria was just an autonomous area with some type of special status.”* This notion is still in the minority. There are many youth movements within the PMR and schools are effective in reinforcing historical narratives and revisionism the schools (Cojocar 2006 )

### **6.2.2 Identical legislation with Moscow**

One subject that was realized from one of the interview subjects was the synchronization of legislation. He said that if there is a law passed in the Russian Federation, the PMR must also adapt this. ( PMR informal interview subject 3) During the last election campaign in 2016, Evgeny Shevchuk signed a decree which called for the law system in Transnistria should be synchronized in accordance with the direction of “internal politics”.(Vlas 2017)

The same month parliament passed legislation giving itself greater authority over state media outlets, including the power to appoint editorial staff, and restricting the ability of any branch of government to establish media outlets without cooperation from the other branches. The legislation enabled officials to limit media access to their activities and bar the use of recording devices.( Freedom house 2017)

### **6.2.3 The geopolitical value of the PMR for the Russian Federation**

While it is quite clear from the 2006 referendum that the PMR would like to be subsequently annexed to the Russian Federation after becoming independent. It appears that this wish is one sided. After examining the relationship the Russian Federation has with the PMR ,it appears that maintaining the status quo is the most desirable option for the Russian Federation. The unresolved situation already hinders Moldova’s chances with the European Union membership and closer ties with NATO (Girgas 2016). As long as the frozen conflict remains, Moldova will continue to face difficulties.

Russian Federation would risk factor if it was to go further in the process of annexing Transnistria. The Russian Federation has already dealt with a large amount of criticism for its actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine and suffered tremendously

from the sanctions. If the Trans Dniester region was annexed, it would further strain relations with Ukraine and Moldova and further drive their integration into western institutions. It is already enough that the two are signatories of the European Association agreements.

The geographical position of the PMR also further complicates the logistics of an annexation from ever happening. The absence of a shared geographical between the PMR and the Russian Federation is the first problem. Transnistria does not touch even the separatist regions of Ukraine either, Although Agnia Grigas points out that it is not terribly far from the Ukrainian territories that are deemed as “Novorossiia”. The Minsk agreements have since put a block on the majority of the separatist behavior in Ukraine.

. Otilla Dhand, the vice president of Teno, an intelligence and advisory firm offered the reasoning that the Russian Federation does not have as much geopolitical interest in Transnistria as it does for Crimea. She informed the American news outlet CNBC *"Russia has roughly 1,000 soldiers based there and also some ammunition and equipment that comes with it. They are not such a substantial force as they are in Crimea and Russia does not have common borders with Trans-Dniester, so it would be difficult to service as a territory"*( Congrave 2014) The closest thing to compared in such a scenario is the situation with Kaliningrad Oblast between Lithuania and Poland.

The PMR like the Republic of Abkhazia also is a lower priority for the Russian Federation. Crimea is a greater strategic significance as it provides a home to the black sea fleet. Crimea is has a deeper root in Russian nationalist discourse than the PMR or Moldova (Rogstad 12 2016) .Immediately following the annexation of Crimea, the Russian loyalists in Transnistria requested that the Russian Federation annex them as well. Mikheil Burla sent a written address to a speaker in Russia's Duma, the lower house, asking him to consider legislation that would allow the defacto state to become part of the Russian Federation ( Congrave 2014) The appeal was not granted. The Russian deputy foreign minister Grigory Karasin said that “Transnistria can be a special area within Moldova” ( Urbanskaya 2018)” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that during the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, an agreement existed between the parties to “seek a special status for Transnistria within the framework of respect for the territorial integrity of Moldova, which should remain a sovereign state with military-political neutrality.” Essentially for

the Russian Federation, this is the case if Chisinau decides to abandon prospects for NATO membership and gives the Trans Dniester region some special guarantees ( Ibid) Although there has been discussions and debates in the Republic of Moldova, regarding NATO membership. The Moldovan government is constitutionally neutral. There is too much gridlock between Pro-Russian and Pro European parties in their parliament. The Republic of Moldova has not shown the same level of enthusiasm towards joining NATO that Georgia has Chisinau is less of a threat to Moscow than Tbilisi and Kiev. Although NATO opened a new office in Chisinau in 2017, it was met with heavy protests.(Necutu 2017) Moldova was also given observer status in the EEU.

The Republic of Moldova and the PMR are also not as historically important as Crimea and Ukraine. This can be seen when dissecting Putin's justifications for the Crimea annexation in his speech to the Russian Federal Assembly on March 18, 2014 (Rogan 2016). There were many subjects touched on ranging from that Crimea as the location of Prince Vladimir's adoption of Orthodoxy, which "predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus and the regret of the 1954 decision to transfer Crimea from the Russian to the Ukrainian Soviet republic. ( Ibid) The Transnistria does not even come close. While it can be established that the PMR does not have the same value to the Russian Federation as Crimea. The Russian federation has benefitted from their patronage in some other factors. The Russian Federation was able to use Transnistria as a way to bypass sanctions set on the European Union. Russian goods are supplied to the PMR, where they receive a '*Transnistrian origin marking and get further exported to the European Union*' according to the chair of Ukraine's Permanent Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, MP Iryna Friz. ( UNIAN 2018)

One of the main reason the Russian Federation has given for deploying troops in the PMR is to keep a tab on the biggest Soviet-era ammunition depot in Eastern Europe, located in Colbasna. (Nescutu 207) According to the Moldovan ambassador to the Czech Republic, there are over 500,000 tons of ammunition. The transnistria region also serves a post for conducting hybrid warfare according to the Moldovan

ambassador. The ambassador claimed that during the conflict in 2014 many Russian within the PMR were responsible for running propaganda sites and conducting acts of espionage. (Moldova Interview)

#### **6.2.4 Increased resentment from Ukraine the PMR**

The annexation of Crimea negatively affected the status that Transnistria has regarding Ukraine. Ukraine in the past held a neutral stance for Transnistria in the past but since the fighting in Eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea the stance became more negative ( Buescher 2016). It was discovered that Transnistria contributed to the attempts to destabilize Odessa. The longtime standing state security member Vladimir Antufeyec played a prominent role in assisting “ The Donetsk People’s Republic” in building structures( Ibid). There were also a significant number of Transnistrian activists that were active in the eastern separatist regions in Ukraine.

Kiev set several countermeasures against Transnistria over a two year period. Buescher highlights some of the most important ones in his report; Entry Ban on members of PMR leadership, Entry ban on Transnistrian men with Russian citizenship, Ban on Russian military transport in through Ukrainian territory. Stepping up border control. The Russian federation came out and complained about his being an economic blockade and prevention of peacekeeping forces.( Freedom house 2016) .Ukraine and Moldova have gotten together in the last year to establish joint border control of the PMR.In July 2017, Poroshenkoo and Filip opened the joint crossing point ‘ Kuchurhan- Pervomasi on their borders in Odessa Oblast. Ukrainian and Moldovan border guards have started to maintain the joint customs and border crossing control. They work together with representatives of EUBAM at national border crossing checkpoints (Zoria 2017).

The foreign ministry of the PMR denounced this as “*a destructive decision*”( Formal interview PMR) . The PMR plead to the Russian Federation for help. The Russian Federation denounced this a blockade. The joint customs union is will slow the flow of Russian goods into the European market.

Geard Toal maintains the Transnistria was originally supposed to give that Russia a degree of leverage over the geopolitical orientation of Ukraine. However the increased tensions in the last years weaken this leverage Toal added that “*This was*

*security through vandalizing the territorial order in Ukraine, the supposed creation of a sphere of influence through destruction and extortion. Instead, it was the creation of further spaces of dependency and instability at the border” (Toal 2016. 281-282).*

### **6.2.5. 2016 Moldovan and Transnistrian elections**

In November of 2016, the republic of Moldova elected Igor Dondon. Pro-Russian Dondon won by 52 percent to the Pro European Maia Sandu at almost 48 percent. One of Dondon’s main goals is to restore the relationship with Russia and lift the sanctions and remove the trade embargo the Russian federation place on Moldovan wine and vegetables. However, the prime minister pointed out that it is impossible to reverse the European association agreement (Al Jazeera 2017).

Dondon ran his campaign that promised for a reassessment of Moldova’s ties with the West, a strengthening of Moldova’s ties to Russia, and making a pledge to go forward with improving Chisinau-Tiraspol relations (Strafor 2016). Dondon also would like to see Moldova’s integration within the EAEU. He followed this up by signing an agreement with the Moscow backed Asian European Economic union in April of 2017. Moldova was subsequently given observer status (RFE 2017). He also announced a week after his election that he would like to possibly create a provision that any agreement with Transnistria would stipulate that Moldova cannot join NATO. (Stratfor 2016)

Dondon has been quoted to support the Russian annexation of Crimea and stating that it was always Russian during his campaign. This was dismissed as “*high treason*” by rival candidate Maia Sandu (Ursu 2016). The official Facebook page for Igor Dondon is also written in Russian and Moldovan. Dondon’s decisions are also heavily opposed by other leaders in Moldova. He has been highly criticized by the Moldovan Prime minister Pavel Filip for signing the agreement with the Eurasian Union and trying to undermine the European Association Agreement (RFE 2016)

Transnistria also had an elections shortly after the Moldovan elections in 2016. Transnistria elected Vladim Krasnoselski on December 12th 2016. (Novostipmr 2016). According to both the Moldovan press and a Facebook post from Igor Dondon, *Igor Dodon, “sincerely” congratulated “Vadim Nikolaevich” on the victory and expressed his belief that the election would open a new page of the relations between Chişinău and Tiraspol, hoping for a meeting in the “following weeks” (Vlad 2016).* Although there was little else done to improve the direction. The PMR and

Moldovan officials interviewed both agree that this will not solve much the frozen conflict. The Moldovan ambassador states that “ *Igor Dondon does not have constitutional power. There are also too many checks and balances placed on him. the parliament and foreign ministry are too much in opposition of his ideas.*”( Interview 1 Moldova) The PMR foreign ministry also does not see much of a change with the Dondon presidency. The deputy to the foreign ministry when asked if he thought the election of Pro-Russian Igor Dondon could bring any changes, pessimistically responded with “ *A year has already passed since Igor Dodon was elected president of Moldova. And he has not demonstrated a clear position on topical and pressing issues of Moldovan-Pridnestrovian relations or a real desire to resolve them. Almost all the ‘initiatives’ of Igor Dodon in this area have remained empty declarations.*” ( Interview 1 PMR 2017) The deputy also went on to say that Dondon has demonstrated himself to be align with the rest of the Moldovan government due to his support for support for a decision to establish joint Moldovan-Ukrainian customs and border control at the border with the PMR.

The situation with Russian-PMR - Moldova relations had since become more complicated in the situation regarding gas in the early part of 2017. Moldova requested at a meeting in Moscow that the Moldovan gas debt be separated from the gas debt from the PMR, which was denied. 88% of Moldova’s gas debt is from Transnistria. ( Vlas 2017) The Moldovan ambassador says this debt is not recognized by the Republic of Moldova. The gas still continues to go to the PMR while the bill is still sent to the Republic of Moldova.

The foreign ministry deputy also states that the PMR has attempted quite a few agreements with the Republic of Moldova that have been largely ignored. “*Pridnestrovie as a gesture of goodwill took several steps towards Moldova – unilaterally stopped criminal proceedings against 10 Moldovan officials, simplified the border crossing procedure for Moldovan citizens, took measures to normalize the situation in schools with Romanian language of teaching, harmonized utility tariffs with Pridnestrovian ones for employees of state bodies of the Republic of Moldova living in the PMR, etc. All these steps could become a good basis for further constructive work, however, did not receive a response from the Moldovan side ( Formal Interview PMR)* While the election of Igor Dondon did show some promising developments , this was short lived. The general position of the PMR’s foreign ministry that that Dondon is incapable and inconsistent.

The Dondon presidency has already been difficult for the Republic of Moldova alone without even taking the frozen conflict into account. The Republic of Moldova has also passed an anti-propaganda law at the end of 2017. The aim of the bill was to combat foreign propaganda. President Dondon accused this legislation as an attempt to induce “anti-Russian hysteria” and violates free speech ( Reuters staff 2017). His powers were temporarily suspended after attempting to veto.

### **6.2.6 Russian economic and military support to the PMR since 2014**

One of the ways to examine the relationship with the PMR and the Russian Federation since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 is to examine if there has been much change in support to the PMR from the Russian side. The situation in Crimea was the highest priority for the Russian Federation in 2014 and still remains to be a high priority four years later. Has this had any effect on the support they give to the PMR by the Russian Federation?

Militarily support to the PMR has increased since the annexation of Crimea. The factory of Kolbasna still remains to be an important factor. The Moldovan ambassador states that there are over 500,000 tons of ammunition stored there. ( Interview) From In 2017, there was an increase of Russian military exercises in the PMR. Chisinau has pressed the UN general assembly to discuss removing Russian troops from the breakaway region. (Necsutu 2017)

Economically, the support has not been constant. The sanctions placed on Moscow and the fall of the Russian ruble has directly impacted Tiraspol. The decline has reduced the flow of remittances coming to the PMR from the Russian Federation. The Russian federation has prioritized Crimea much higher than Transnistria. Its funds and resources are limited. (Urbanskaya 2018) Urbanska also adds that *“Experts attribute this to the fact that the purchasing power of labor migrants has fallen, so they have to refuse to help their relatives in Transnistria.”* There have also been cuts in social services provided by the Russian Federation. Moscow has had to cut subsidies to and close some hospitals.( Tabachinik 2017)

Increased border control between Moldova and Ukraine has also slowed down the some of the flow of illegal goods coming through Transnistria. The gas usage to the PMR is still unresolved. It does remain to be a major chip in bargaining power for

both the PMR and the Republic of Moldova. The residents of the PMR receive gas free of charge. One of the interviewees who also holds Russian nationality expressed her disdain for how the Russian federation uses the situation for the gas to motivate people. *“There are actually many other Russians just outside of Moscow that also have their gas off often. People here are so naive”* (Interview subject number 2 . 2017) The gas debt to the Republic of Moldova is over 5.5 million. ( Radio free europe 2016) However, as stated in the previous section, it remains to be unpaid.

One aspect of Russian economic support that is dramatically different than the Republic of Abkhazia is the lack of tourism. There is little in the PMR to attract Russian tourists. The PMR sees virtually no tourists from the Russian Federation. There are very few tourists, but the majority of them are from the West. One of the interviewers subjects worked part time as a guide in the past mentioned that he usually guides people from countries such as Germany or Australia. ( Informal interview subject 1) He said *it is also entertaining to stay here and host foreigners from the West or anywhere else. This place actually has much more western tourists than Russian tourists. They come here because it is some soviet theme amusement park in their eyes.*

The Russian Federation still actively implements a fair number of soft power mechanisms within the PMR. The number of Russian owned media outlets remain high. In addition, virtually all of Transnistrian news outlets' are owned by a small number of Russian oligarchs.( Freedom Index 2017) According to the Moldovan ambassador, media outlets in the PMR run fake headlines such as “Moldova seeks to reunite with Romania” in order to propagate the and discredit the Moldovan or any other press (Interview Moldova).

The Republic of Moldova within the last year has hit a peak of frustration with the involvement of the Russian Federation in this frozen conflict. The recently appointed speaker to the Moldovan parliament has insisted that the Russian Federation compensate them for their involvement in the Transnistria conflict. Speaker Candu said that the Republic of Moldova was considering hiring an international law firm to calculate the losses caused by the Russian presence in Transnistria over 25 years, which could amount to billions of dollars. (

Necutu 2018) The Republic of Moldova is also actively trying to get the UN involved in mandating an end to Russian troops in Transnistria.

### 6.2.7 The aging population of the PMR

One of the bleak indicators about the PMRs future can be seen in the population. The PMR has one of the largest brain drains within Europe.. The young and the educated appear to have little desire to stay. Another testament that was gathered from an essay about Transnistria on the European Council of Foreign relations confirmed the same thing *“The main challenge for the Transnistria of today is to stop the brain drain and the flow of labour migrants to Russia. Students do not hide the fact that, after graduating, they dream of leaving Transnistria for Russia, where they would be happy to have any low-skilled job.”*( Lungu 2016)

Two of the informal interview subjects were asked about why are they still in Transnistria. They both said their intentions were for the short term. Both of them expressed interest in moving somewhere in Europe but a long term visa is too difficult or expensive to obtain. One of them said that he applied for a visa to study abroad in Australia for a year, but was denied. *They denied me for my visa because they were afraid I would overstay and try to settle there permanently. It is a little sad that places don't give us a chance.* The other one cited that access to a free family flat was also a factor. She also added that the economic situation in Moldova is not much better. ( informal interview subject 2) The economic situation in Moldova is one of the factors that help the PMR survive. Moldova and Ukraine are both in the running for the poorest country in Europe (Rummer 2017). Popsecu explained the government of the PMR uses this as a way to keep the population uninterested in the Republic of Moldova ( Popsecu 2006) He stated *“economic arguments have been central in building ideological support for Transnistrian independence from Moldova. The economic argument has several dimensions. A first one is that Transnistria is richer than Moldova, and once it is independent it will be even better off.* The Republic of Moldova has similar problems with a brain drain. They also have a declining birth rate and shortage of skilled and unskilled labor. Rummer cited that Moldova is also the third-largest recipient of foreign remittances in the world, behind only Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan( Rummer 2017).

While the Republic of Moldova remains as poor as the PMR, the institutions are at least recognized. This lack of internationally recognized universities and secondary schools help increase the flow of the brain drain. There lacks an appeal to study there as whatever degree a student obtains is not recognized by the rest of the world. Transnistrian school leaving certificates usually have to be specially validated to be recognized in other countries. (Pasenteva 2018)

### **6.3 The PMR's Linkage and Leverage to the Russian Federation**

The strongest linkage with the PMR that can be used as leverage for the Moldova are the information and social. The Russian Federation has made less interstate engagements with the PMR than it has with the Republic of Abkhazia. The Russian Federation has conducted more military exercises, but has remained reclusive in the idea of annexation. The economic linkage is weaker since the sanctions

The linkage to the PMR was stronger leverage on the Republic of Moldova before the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The strengthened border controls with Moldova and Ukraine have made the conflict less useful for the Russian Federation and put an economic drain on the PMR and The Russian Federation.

### **6.4 Conclusion for case study 2**

After examining the role of the Russian Federation as a patron state to this case study these are the answers that have resulted from the research questions.

1. How has 2014 annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation affected the relationship Russia and other de facto states that remain dependent on Russia for their survival?
2. How much does Russian patronage contribute to the state building of these de facto states?

The relationship that has been affected with the Russian federation has been largely remained unchanged with the general perception. The situation with the PMR is still one sided. The Russian federation still has yet to recognize the PMR three years after the annexation. There has been very little effort made with the Russian Federation to implement change. It appears by looking at the geography and value the PMR has for the Russian Federation, that the Russian federation has Transnistria on a lower priority than it does for other areas. The PMR has suffered from Russian sanctions. The PMR also alienated its Ukrainian neighbor that originally held a neutral position. This alienation caused cooperation among Ukraine and Moldova taking more action against Transnistria than it did in the past.

The failing Novorossiia goal has a big impact. If the separatists in Eastern Ukraine were more successful being able to implement their goals of being extended all the way past Odessa to the Transnistrian border, there would have been more of a chance. This ultimately failed. However towards the end of the research, there has been a development within Eastern Ukraine that could be more of a sign for Transnistria. On July 18th 2017, separatists in Eastern Ukraine announced the “*New state of Malorossiia*” or “*Little Russia* “. The overall goal is overtake Ukraine which in theory could annex the territory of Transnistria. The merging with Belarus and Russia is another goal. (Taylor 2017) The likelihood of these goals are nearly impossible and none of this appears to be a promising solution for anyone. The Russian federation and other Ukrainian separatist regions have distanced themselves from this idea already.

While the goals of this newly created “state’ The creation of Little Russia undermines the 2015 Minsk Agreements set into place. One of the agreements for the Minsk accords was the territory sovereignty of Ukraine would not be violated.( Neef 2017) There are many other flaws. Neither Transnistria nor Moldova are as important to the Russian Federation as Crimea and Ukraine.

The answer to the second question is that Russian patronage does isolate the PMR from the rest of the world. However, most of the residents of the PMR do not suffer from isolation to the same extent as the Republic of Abkhazia. The majority of residents in Abkhazia have at least one or two other passports that enables them to leave when they want. For example two of the common second passports (Moldova and Ukraine) that residents of the PMR have enable them to visa free access to the

European Union. Russian patronage does give the PMR a false sense of security and optimism. The deputy to the foreign minister of the PMR really believes that one day, they will be recognized by the Russian Federation. (Interview 1 PMR) In Truth, the PMR like the Republic of Abkhazia is a lower priority for the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation does not see the PMR or Moldova in the same way as does with Ukraine or Belarus. Ukraine and Ukrainians are regularly considered by Russian leaders as brothers of Russia, part of the same family with the same religious and cultural heritage (Hopf 2016, 245) . The pride placed on Moldova is not the same. ( Rogstad 9 2016). The PMR has a stronger sentimental connection to the Russian Federation than the Russian Federation for it. The Russian Federation continues to assert its policy in these de facto states over geopolitical motives to ensure that Moldova does not become integrated into western institutions. (IBID). This is simply a matter of practicality for the Russian Federation in the same way that it is practical for the Russian Federation to give its patronage for the Republic of Abkhazia. The relationship the Russian has with Moldova could be more amicable within the future as well. When examining the political discourse of Moldova, the Pro Russian side and Pro European side are almost equal in numbers. Igor Dondon's party only won by 53 percent while Maia Sandu's Pro- European party only lost by 47 percent ( Al Jazerra 2017) The contested result could lead to further destabilization of Moldova in the future which in turn would destabilize the PMR. The Republic of Moldova is constantly in a geopolitical tug of war between Russia and Europe

De Waal's suggestion for Georgia to look at the parent state could also be applied to the same case for Moldova. The PMR should look to the Republic of Moldova to reach a compromise similar to the case of Gauagazia. The Moldovan ambassador also agreed that there could be negotiations to allow transnistria a level of autonomy that Gauagazia has.

To answer the sub question "Does the Russian Federation benefit from the status quo of de facto states. The answer is different compared to the case of Abkhazia. It really does not. The PMR are bigger sponges off the Russian Federation as a whole. There are very few benefits for them in acting as a patron state especially since the establishment of Moldovan –Ukrainian border control. The political and

economic hassle of keeping the status quo in the PMR is simply not worth it for the Russian Federation.

## **Chapter 7: Overall conclusion**

The 1st hypothesis was inconsistent for the case studies. There was some element of truth. The relationship has remained positive for both cases. But there has been some changes to both that could in turn weaken. They both have suffered to some extent economically and have been demoted to a lower priority by the Russian Federation.

While the hypotheses that “Russian patronage hinders the state building of the de facto states” was proven to be true to both of the studies. One of the biggest realizations to this study is how one sided this dependency on the patron state is for both of these de facto states.

The third hypotheses “The Russian Federation benefits from the status quo of these conflicts” is different for each of the cases. Moscow does not benefit by that much by maintaining a stake in these conflicts or not at all. It appears that this is really a burden on the Russian Federation if anything. Both of these frozen conflicts are an economic burden and do not have much to offer the Russian Federation in most aspects. While it has been established multiple times in this research and every other study regarding this topic is that aiding in these frozen conflict destabilise the parent states of Moldova and Georgia which serve as a buffer zone. What has not been established is if The Russian Federation is willing to keep paying the price to maintain the status quo. As Urbanskaya said “ It has become quite taxing to allow itself the “luxury” of maintaining separatist “republics.” (Urbansaya 2018). This could be the long term outcome for these de facto states.

It is not even guaranteed that Moldova and Georgia will be fully integrated within the West. There have been some programs that could signal western integration implemented, but the process for them to be integrated into either NATO or European Union is many years off. For example, in order to be NATO member a country's defense budget must be above 2 percent, currently Moldova's only stand at

0.5 percent (Necutu 2017) The Western institutions are also considerably weaker than they were a few years ago. The desire to expand has debatably lost some of its appeal and interest on all sides. The Russian Federation is still pretty efficient in its soft power mechanisms with the parent states. While allegations of Russian hacking have been recently made within West, this is not a new thing with Russia's near abroad. (RFE)

If both of these de facto states would like to advance their state building. They must do so with in the correct framework within International Law. The Russian Federation actively aiding to their secessionist cause does not work according to what was established within the part of the thesis that discussed the Kosovo Precedent. The Republic of Abkhazia shows more promise in making their case, but they cannot do so without seeking a position to compromise with Tbilisi. They cannot advance further if they keep making interstate agreements with the Russian Federation. The rest of the international community will never take their case of independence seriously.

While the most recommended action would be is for both of these de facto states to start looking at their parent state to reach a compromise. However with the current political rhetoric, soft power tactics implemented by the Russian empire and reluctance to make a compromise from both de facto states this is a daunting task. Such a compromise won't likely be made until is until it is already too late and the Russian Federation pulls its economic and military support.

## References

- Achba, A. (2016, September 01). Abkhazia – Russia's tight embrace. Retrieved from [https://www.ecfr.eu/article/essay\\_abkhazia\\_russias\\_tight\\_embrace](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/essay_abkhazia_russias_tight_embrace)
- Alikin, A. (2017, March 17). Crimea Struggles to Attract Private Investment. Retrieved from <https://eurasianet.org/s/crimea-struggles-to-attract-private-investment>
- Artman, V. M. (2013). Documenting Territory: Passportisation, Territory, and Exception in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. *Geopolitics*, 18(3), 682-704. doi:10.1080/14650045.2013.769963

- Asmus, R. D. (2010). *A little war that shook the world: Georgia, Russia and the future of the West*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Balmaceda, M. M. (2013). Privatization and elite defection in de facto states: The case of Transnistria, 1991–2012. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 46(4), 445-454.  
doi:10.1016/j.postcomstud.2013.08.001
- Balmforth, T. (2016, June 19). Russian Return To 'Soviet Riviera' Brings Hope, Concern To Breakaway Abkhazia. Retrieved from <https://www.rferl.org/a/abkhazia-soviet-riviera-russians-returning-hopes-concerns/27807503.html>
- Barkin, J. S. (2003). Realist Constructivism. *International Studies Review*.  
doi:10.1017/cbo9780511750410
- Beyer, J., & Wolff, S. (2016). Linkage and leverage effects on Moldovas Transnistria problem. *East European Politics*, 32(3), 335-354. doi:10.1080/21599165.2015.1124092
- Blakkisrud, H., & Kolstø, P. (2012). Dynamics of de facto statehood: The South Caucasian de facto states between secession and sovereignty. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 12(2), 281-298. doi:10.1080/14683857.2012.686013
- Büscher, K. (2016). He Transnistria Conflict in Light of the Crisis over Ukraine. *WP Research Paper 2016/*. Retrieved 2016.
- Caspersen, N. (2013). *Unrecognized States: The Struggle for Sovereignty in the Modern International System*. Oxford: Wiley.
- Cojocaru, N. (2006). Nationalism And Identity In Transnistria. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 19(3-4), 261-272. doi:10.1080/13511610601029813
- Comai, G., & Venturi, B. (2015). Language and education laws in multi-ethnic de facto states: The cases of Abkhazia and Transnistria. *Nationalities Papers*, 43(6), 886-905.  
doi:10.1080/00905992.2015.1082996

- Connelly, A. (2014, March 14). Transnistria: Europe's other Crimea. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/transnistria-europe-other-crimea-2014313132814552215.html>
- Constitution of the Pridnestrovskaaia Moldavskaia Respublica. (2014, October 01). Retrieved from <http://mfa-pmr.org/en/constitution>
- De waal, T. (n.d.). Abkhazia: Still Isolated, Still Proud. Retrieved from <http://carnegieurope.eu/strategieurope/73579?lang=en>
- De waal Thomas Crimea, Russia and Options for Engagement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. (2015, May 26). Retrieved from <https://ge.boell.org/en/2015/11/26/crimea-russia-and-options-engagement-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia>
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.
- Fischer, S. (2014). *The Conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Light of the Crisis over Ukraine*.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2004). *Bringing power to planning research: One researchers praxis story*. Aalborg: Aalborg University, Department of Development and Planning.
- Foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation*. (1993). Washington, D.C.: Foreign Broadcast Information Service.
- Fuller, L. (2017, August 28). Analysis: Does Rising Crime In Abkhazia Pose A Threat To Russia? Retrieved from <https://www.rferl.org/a/abkhazia-unemployment-russia/28701606.html>
- GEORGE, J. (2016). *Politics of ethnic separatism in russia and georgia*. Place of publication not identified: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN.
- Georgia to Issue Abkhaz and Ossetians Passports, Granting Visa Free Travel to EU. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/3323/Georgia-to-Issue-Abkhaz-and-Ossetians-Passports,-Granting-Visa-Free-Travel-to-EU>

- R. (2016, November 23). Georgia, U.S. Criticize New Russian-Abkhaz Military Force. Retrieved from <https://www.rferl.org/a/us-russia-abkhazia-military-force/28134275.html>
- Gerrits, A. W., & Bader, M. (2016). Russian patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Implications for conflict resolution. *East European Politics*, 32(3), 297-313.  
doi:10.1080/21599165.2016.1166104
- Gorenburg, D. P. (n.d.). The Soviet Institutional Legacy and Ethno-Nationalist Ideology. *Minority Ethnic Mobilization in the Russian Federation*, 2006th ser., 77-117.  
doi:10.1017/cbo9780511550348.005
- Grigas, A. (2016). *Beyond Crimea: The new Russian empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Grono. (2016, November 23). Isolation of Post-Soviet Conflict Regions Narrows the Road to Peace. Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/isolation-post-soviet-conflict-regions-narrows-road-peace>
- Herpen, M. V. (2015). *Putins wars: The rise of Russias new imperialism*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- HOW RUSSIAN SOFT POWER FAILS IN ESTONIA: OR, WHY THE ... (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=3B98B4EEA3294775BA5D5C4D4843AAC8&CID=156FCF366D7E6C082B32C4DA6CD16D23&rd=1&h=maz8g7bZk9XejG1s8UV8r\\_jJQwm0u8NzKArfPxRK53w&v=1&r=https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kristian\\_Nielsen9/publication/313258778\\_How\\_Russian\\_Soft\\_Power\\_Fails\\_in\\_Estonia\\_Or\\_Why\\_the\\_Russophone\\_Minorities\\_Remain\\_Quiescent/links/595144c4458515a207f496a2/How-Russian-Soft-Power-Fails-in-Estonia-Or-Why-the-Russophone-Minorities-Remain-Quiescent.pdf&p=DevEx.LB.1,5492.1](https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=3B98B4EEA3294775BA5D5C4D4843AAC8&CID=156FCF366D7E6C082B32C4DA6CD16D23&rd=1&h=maz8g7bZk9XejG1s8UV8r_jJQwm0u8NzKArfPxRK53w&v=1&r=https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kristian_Nielsen9/publication/313258778_How_Russian_Soft_Power_Fails_in_Estonia_Or_Why_the_Russophone_Minorities_Remain_Quiescent/links/595144c4458515a207f496a2/How-Russian-Soft-Power-Fails-in-Estonia-Or-Why-the-Russophone-Minorities-Remain-Quiescent.pdf&p=DevEx.LB.1,5492.1)
- Hughes, J., & Sasse, G. (2016). Power ideas and conflict: Ideology, linkage and leverage in Crimea and Chechnya. *East European Politics*, 32(3), 314-334.  
doi:10.1080/21599165.2015.1124091

- Human Rights in Abkhazia Today - Olof Palme International ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=78BD47FD434C4E899630047330BD92E6&CID=27599A49DFE464883E6B91A2DE4B658C&rd=1&h=5CxLnIxyKxjYCl-91Py3JsRLQepbw9mJTUx4fiCAxQ&v=1&r=https://www.palmecenter.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Human-Rights-in-Abkhazia-Today-report-by-Thomas-Hammarberg-and-Magdalena-Grono.pdf&p=DevEx.LB.1,5530.1>
- A. (1017, February). Informal Interview- Rbynitsa [Telephone interview].
- Kallas, K. (2016). Claiming the diaspora: Russia's compatriot policy and its reception by Estonian-Russian population. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*.
- Kaufman, S. J., & Bowers, S. R. (1998). Transnational dimensions of the Transnistrian conflict. *Nationalities Papers*,26(1), 129-146. doi:10.1080/00905999808408554
- Klu, U., Schepp, M., & Wiegrefe, K. (2009, November 26). NATO's Eastward Expansion: Did the West Break Its Promise to Moscow? - SPIEGEL ONLINE - International. Retrieved from <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/nato-s-eastward-expansion-did-the-west-break-its-promise-to-moscow-a-663315.html>
- Foreign Ministry Republic of Abkhazia [Online interview]. (2018, March/April).
- Foreign Ministry PMR [Online interview]. (2017, December 22).
- Moldovan embassy interview [Personal interview]. (2018, January 5).
- Kolstø, P. (1997). After the USSR. Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States, by Anatoly M. Khazanov. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1995. Reviewed by Pal Kolstø. *Journal of Political Ecology*,4(1), 45. doi:10.2458/v4i1.21387
- Kolstø, P., & Malgin, A. (1998). The Transnistrian republic: A case of politicized regionalism. *Nationalities Papers*,26(1), 103-127. doi:10.1080/00905999808408553
- Kolstø, P. (2006). The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-States. *Journal of Peace Research*,43(6), 723-740. doi:10.1177/0022343306068102

- Laurinavičiūtė, L., & Biekša, L. (2015). The relevance of remedial secession in the post-Soviet “frozen conflicts”. *International Comparative Jurisprudence*, 1(1), 66-75.  
doi:10.1016/j.icj.2015.10.008
- Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2013). *Competitive authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lynch, D. (2004). *Engaging Eurasias separatist states: Unresolved conflicts and de facto states*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Marxsen, C. (n.d.). An International Law Perspective - MPIL. Retrieved from [http://www.bing.com/cr?IG=48902B7E93E146C29B3051D10E397EC5&CID=10DD6B7C3D546EF20C7560973CFB6FC2&rd=1&h=XP5zBxJRY072Ja8R9pbqGcXc8\\_nAVniHyWYoxTHtfGo&v=1&r=http://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/Marxsen\\_2014\\_-\\_The\\_crimea\\_crisis\\_-\\_an\\_international\\_law\\_perspective.pdf&p=DevEx.LB.1,5067.1](http://www.bing.com/cr?IG=48902B7E93E146C29B3051D10E397EC5&CID=10DD6B7C3D546EF20C7560973CFB6FC2&rd=1&h=XP5zBxJRY072Ja8R9pbqGcXc8_nAVniHyWYoxTHtfGo&v=1&r=http://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/Marxsen_2014_-_The_crimea_crisis_-_an_international_law_perspective.pdf&p=DevEx.LB.1,5067.1)
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2016, January 28). Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>
- Moldova, Armenia, Ukraine, Georgia: In the cycle of geopolitical choice. (2016, November 20). Retrieved from <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2016/11/20/moldova-armenia-ukraine-georgia-in-the-cycle-of-geopolitical-choice>
- Moldovan leader's powers suspended to enact Russian TV curbs. (2018, January 05). Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-moldova-president/moldovan-leaders-powers-suspended-to-enact-russian-tv-curbs-idUSKBN1EU1LE>
- Necsutu. (2016). Moldova Seeks Russian Troop Withdrawal from Transnistria. Retrieved from <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/russian-army-rotates-its-peacekeepers-in-transnistria-10-23-2017>

- O'Loughlin, J., Kolossov, V., & Toal, G. (2014). Inside the post-Soviet de facto states: A comparison of attitudes in Abkhazia, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 55(5), 423-456.  
doi:10.1080/15387216.2015.1012644
- O'Loughlin, J., Toal, G., & Kolosov, V. (2016). The rise and fall of "Novorossiia": Examining support for a separatist geopolitical imaginary in southeast Ukraine. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 33(2), 124-144. doi:10.1080/1060586x.2016.1146452
- Person, R. (2015, November 12). 6 reasons not to worry about Russia invading the Baltics. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/12/6-reasons-not-to-worry-about-russia-invading-the-baltics/>
- Popescu, N. (2007). Europe's Unrecognised Neighbours: The EU in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. doi:10.2139/ssrn.1338024
- Pridnestrovians' stance on country's foreign policy remains unchanged. (2016, September 20). Retrieved from <https://novostipmr.com/en/news/16-09-20/pridnestrovians-stance-countrys-foreign-policy-remains-unchanged>
- Puhl, J. (2015, July 03). The Baltic Front: Where Putin's Empire Meets the EU - SPIEGEL ONLINE - International. Retrieved from <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/concerns-grow-in-baltics-over-resurgent-russia-a-1041448.html>
- Riegl, M., Doboš, B., Bar, S., Baar, V., Bečka, J., Berg, E., . . . Rudincová, K. (2017). *Unrecognized states and secession in the 21st century*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Rogstad, A. (2016). The Next Crimea? *Problems of Post-Communism*, 65(1), 49-64.  
doi:10.1080/10758216.2016.1237855
- Roper. (2010). Regionalism in Moldova: The Case of Transnistria and Gagauzia.
- Russia and Post-Soviet "Russian Diaspora": Contrasting Visions, Conflicting Projects. (n.d.). Retrieved from

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13537113.2011.550247?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

Russian parliament ratifies agreement on joint Russia-Abkhazia group of forces. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://tass.com/defense/910201>

Sasse, G. (2007). *The Crimea question: Identity, transition, and conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute.

Sharkov, D. (2016, December 19). Russia is hoping to attract 10 million tourists to Crimea by 2019. Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.com/russia-aims-lure-10-million-tourists-crimea-2019-531885>

Slobodchikoff, M. O., & Davis, G. D. (2017). Roots of Russian Soft Power: Rethinking Russian National Identity. *Comparative Politics Russia*, 8(2), 19-36. doi:10.18611/2221-3279-2017-8-2-19-36

Tamkin, E. (2017, April 14). Russia's Foreign Minister Announces Visit to Open Embassy in Abkhazia. Retrieved from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/14/russias-foreign-minister-announces-visit-to-open-embassy-in-abkhazia/>

M. (n.d.). The Great Population Transfers of the Peoples of the USSR. Retrieved from <https://www.meydan.tv/en/site/society/23761/>

Toal, G., & O'Loughlin, J. (2017). 'Why Did MH17 Crash?': Blame Attribution, Television News and Public Opinion in Southeastern Ukraine, Crimea and the De Facto States of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria. *Geopolitics*, 1-35. doi:10.1080/14650045.2017.1364238

Tough lessons in Transnistria. (2018, January 07). Retrieved from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/viktoria-pashentseva/tough-lessons-in-transnistria>

Transnistria Primer. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/10/transnistria-primer/>

- Trenin, D. V. (2010). *Post-imperium: Russia and its neighbors*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- Tuathail, G. O. (n.d.). *Near abroad: Putin, the West and the contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus*.
- Tuathail, G. O. (2016). *Near abroad: Putin, the West and the contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus*.
- Unprecedented growth of tourism continues in Georgia ... (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=03692398AF984A0AA255534431AE1F39&CID=3A86C85328F9671D3311C3B8295666DA&rd=1&h=Ma0mSm660aStqQ2DFuBZLXw\\_zN65mR72BPktXv2Md\\_Y&v=1&r=https://www.georgianjournal.ge/business/34076-unprecedented-growth-of-tourism-continues-in-georgia.html&p=DevEx.LB.1,5068.1](https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=03692398AF984A0AA255534431AE1F39&CID=3A86C85328F9671D3311C3B8295666DA&rd=1&h=Ma0mSm660aStqQ2DFuBZLXw_zN65mR72BPktXv2Md_Y&v=1&r=https://www.georgianjournal.ge/business/34076-unprecedented-growth-of-tourism-continues-in-georgia.html&p=DevEx.LB.1,5068.1)
- Urbanskaya, T. (2018). Trouble in Transnistria. Retrieved from <https://www.unian.info/politics/1054236-trouble-in-transnistria.html>
- Walker, S. (2016, May 27). World Cup for unrecognised states kicks off in Abkhazia. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2016/may/27/conifa-world-cup-unrecognised-states-kicks-off-abkhazia>
- Waltz, K. N. (2010). *Theory of international politics*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Way, L. A., & Levitsky, S. (2007). Linkage, Leverage, and the Post-Communist Divide. *East European Politics & Societies*, 21(1), 48-66. doi:10.1177/0888325406297134
- Whitmore, B. (2017, June 29). We're All Russia's Neighbors Now. Retrieved from <https://www.rferl.org/a/were-all-russias-neighbors-power-vertical/28585339.html>
- Zoria, Y. (2017, July 21). Ukraine helps Moldova regain control over border in Transnistrian region -. Retrieved from <http://euromaidanpress.com/2017/07/21/ukraine-helps-moldova-regain-control-over-border-in-transnistria-region/>





