NICU POPESCU

Democracy in Secessionism: Transnistria and Abkhazia's Domestic Policies

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Contents

Introduction¹

The study of democracy and democratic transition in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is a well developed field. However, existing literature almost never deals with democratic developments, or lack of it, in a number of secessionist entities that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the regions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria.

These secessionist entities don't exist on the map, as they are *de jure* part of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. But they do exist in reality, and their impact on regional and European politics is real. Most politicians and observers take for granted the lack of democracy in these secessionist entities. But by their regional standards, some of the secessionist entities boast surprising levels of political pluralism. Certainly, all the secessionist entities are very far from functioning democratic entities. But the domestic politics in these secessionist entities should not be ignored, nor downplayed. They can tell an interesting story of how political pluralism fails or succeeds not only in a postcommunist transition, but also in a post-war context.

Take the stories of Transnistria and Abkhazia that formally are part of Moldova and Georgia. Transnistria and Abkhazia are both secessionist entities that emerged after the break-up of the Soviet Union both are unrecognized internationally, isolated from international developments, and very closely associated and supported by Russia.

However their democratic credentials could hardly be more different. In the Caucasus, Abkhazia is poor, destroyed after the war, still living in a constant psychological expectation of war (which is not always groundless), in a deep demographic crisis, quite rural, under economic blockade, isolated from the outside world geographically and politically, far from Europe, and in a region that is undemocratic and unstable.

Transnistria tells a different story. It is a few dozens kilometers from the border of the enlarged EU, it is situated between the more or less democratic Ukraine and Moldova proper, it is industrialized, urban, relatively developed, almost half of its trade is with the

EU and the US, war with Moldova does not seem to be even a theoretical possibility, foreigners can travel easily there and it has the biggest population of the secessionist entities in former Soviet Union.

The obvious candidate for greater pluralism, if not democracy, is Transnistria. But this is not so. Surprisingly, it is Abkhazia which has a relatively developed civil society, where the opposition won presidential elections at exactly the same time as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, and its media is an interesting reading. By contrast, the political elite in Transnistria and its *de facto* president remained in firm control through methods which were far from democratic. No change of presidents, no critical media, a suppressed and small civil society, and no credible opposition, except for a few virtual parties designed to create an illusion of political competition.

Thus the present paper tries inquire the origin of these developments. It tries to address such questions as: how undemocratic the secessionist entities really are? Are secessionist entities inherently undemocratic, or there are other factors that determine undemocratic developments? And finally why some secessionist entities are less democratic than others? What explains patterns of more democratic developments in some secessionist regions, while not in others?

The structure of the paper is as following. First, it gives an account of domestic politics patterns in Transnistria. Second, it looks into the political processes in Abkhazia, and partly South Ossetia. It concludes with an analysis of the factors that determine divergent political patterns in the secessionist entities.

1 Domestic politics in Transnistria

The secessionist authorities in Transnistria have managed to build a more or less functioning statelike entity. Transnistria has an organized political leadership, control over a defined territory and seeks international recognition. Its domestic politics is highly authoritarian. The way Transnistria survived as an unrecognized entity for some 15 years rests on a number of economic, political and security factors. These factors are crucial when trying to understand domestic politics patterns in the region.[2]

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[2] This section is partly based on the author's "The EU in Moldova – Settling Conflicts in the Neighborhood", Occasional Paper 60, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2005.

1.1 Economic factors

Economically, Transnistria has survived by trade – legal at times, but mainly semi-legal and illicit. Transnistria's economic survival has been assured by Russian gas, which is never paid by Transnistria, and amounts to a significant underwriting of Transnistrian separatism. The region has exported steel and textiles mainly to EU member states and the United States. In fact, the competitiveness of Transnistria's exports is based on lower tariffs for gas and electricity, possible because of Russia's support.[3] By the region's standards, these factors have created a rather solid basis for the separatist leadership to claim that economically Transnistria is a functioning entity.

Controlling a considerable part of Moldova's border with Ukraine, as well as trade routes from Moldova to Russia and Ukraine, coupled with involvement in arms trade and all forms of trafficking – all of these factors have created a strong incentive structure to maintain the status quo.[4] Control of the border has turned into a lucrative business where Transnistria has been a transit point for smuggled goods into Ukraine and Moldova.[5]

The Transnistrian economy is highly concentrated. A dozen enterprises dominate the economy of the region, and small and medium enterprises produce a negligible share of the local GDP. The biggest economic asset of the region is the Rybnitsa steel works, or MMZ, which allegedly accounts for almost half of the Transnistrian GDP and over a half of the region's budget income. The main Transnistrian companies, such as Moldavizolit, Moldavkabel, Tighina, Floare, Tirotex, Odema, MMZ, and Vestra all have established relations with Western partners. There are at least eighteen Transnistrian-German joint ventures set up in Transnistria. The Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Tiraspol and Leipzig have direct ties.[6]

Smuggling activities have been protected and controlled by a few clans, all of them connected and dependent on the secessionist authorities. Thus most economic activity in

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[3] See the Center for Strategic Studies and Reforms, *Evolution of the Transnistrian Economy: critical appraisal* (Chisinau: October 2001); available at: www.cisr-md.org.
[4] Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States,* Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004.
[5] Interviews With experts of the EU Border Assistance Mission to Ukraine and Moldova, Kuchurgan and Kiev, May 2006.
[6] See Anatoly Gudym, Vladislav Kutyrkin, Galina Shelari, *Transnistrian Economy: Initiatives and Risks*, June 2003: available at: http://www.cisr-md.org

Transnistria is controlled by a few groups situated at the confluence between legal and illegal business and politics.

1.2 Political environment

Politics in Transnistria has been determined by the imperative of its elites to retain power. These elites benefit politically and economically from the status quo. The leadership of Transnistria has suppressed any form of political non-loyalty, let alone opposition to the government. But they have also managed to build a strong political regime.

The entity is dominated by an elite that that does not play according to the democratic rules of the game. Nor can it be considered representative of the population of Transnistria, as none of the elections in Transnistria over the last decade have met even minimal standards of fairness and freedom. Igor Smirnov, the president of Transnistria and a Russian citizen, is an authoritarian leader whose regime is based on the suppression of any dissent. A Ministry of State Security, or *Ministerstvo Gosudrstvennoi Bezopasnosti*, is highly influential and all-pervasive in the business, media, universities, and fake civil society organizations.

At the same time Transnistrian authorities have managed to impose some kind of order after the war on secession. Unlike in many other post-conflict environments, the post-war situation did not degenerate into a chaos of total insecurity, competing militias and landlords controlling different chunks of the border. The secessionist authorities could assert their dominance of the political, security and economic life of the region, and have ensured what could be called a monopoly on the use of organized violence in the region.

This was partly realized through the integration of irregulars (Kozaks and the so called Transnistrian guards or *gvardeitsy*) into an oversized security apparatus, and ruthless elimination of those potential landlords who challenged Smirnov immediately after the 1992 war. Thus, in some respect Transnistria's authoritarianism rests on a strong political regime that is undemocratic but functional.

In order to divert international criticism for lack of democracy, as well to divert internal dissatisfaction with the current leadership, the Transnistrian authorities initiated a process of fake party building. After almost 15 years of non-existence of political parties, in just a

few weeks in July and August 2006 a number of virtual parties and political movements were suddenly registered.[7] The aim was to fake a multi-party political system, while maintaining the authoritarian nature of the regime intact.[8] Such virtual parties would allow Transnistrian to say that they have a multi-party system, while not compromising on the essence of the regime.

1.3 Civil society

Civil society is extremely weak and under pressure in the region. The few NGOs that are not dependent on the government try to focus on social, rather than political issues and are subject to governmental pressure. Openness and the circulation of ideas and people is discouraged. The attitude towards the NGOs was expressed by highly-influential head of the Transnistrian Ministry of State Security, Vladimir Antiufeev, who stated: 'The West, or more exactly the US, considers it timely to liquidate the Transnistrian statehood. The many NGOs are to be used as an instrument of accomplishing a *coup d'état* […] Youth are brainwashed […] For example, students of the Transnistrian State University are invited to international conferences, they receive grants etc … We are following this and we know that 90% of the funds provided by the West for financing agents of influence are being mismanaged. This is good. Otherwise we would have had more troubles'.[9] And Antiufeev's conclusion is that "the subversive activities of foreign intelligence services through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is becoming more and more a dominant security threat" for Transnistria.[10]

These words result in deeds. There have been instances of open pressure and harassment of NGO activist. Foreign funding for NGOs was banned outright in March 2006, but in May 2006 the ban was modified to include only funding for NGOs pursuing political objectives. Foreign funding also includes local companies which are more than

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[7] Vladimir Socor, Russian Political Campaign for a second Kalinigrad, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 11 August 2006.
[8] On how post soviet states build façade democracies see Andrew Wilson's *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, Yale University Press 2005.
[9] Vladimir Antiufeev, 'The West decided to liquidate Transnistrian statehood' ('Zapad reshil likvidirovati pridnestovskuju gosuderstvennosti'), *Vremya Novostei* 24 May 2005, available at: http://www.vremya.ru
[10] Speech by Vladimir Antiufeev in front of the employees of the Ministry of State Security of Transnistria,17 May 2006, http://olvia.idknet.com/ol76-05-06.htm

20% owned by foreigners, anonymous sources of funding and international organizations.[11]

NGOs however try to circumvent this ban by presenting their activities as social or educational projects.[12] This has worked so far, but NGOs could have problems anytime as it is up to the authorities to decide where lies the thin line between educational or social projects which are apolitical and those which "pursue political objectives". And still, NGO activists emphasize that despite pressures, "it is possible to work in Transnistria", and that more external support is needed.

Besides pressure, the authorities [13] also created and support a wide network of "*obshetvennye organizatsii"*, which are different types of movements, organizations and associations which are not independent from the authorities, but create the illusion of a developed and active civic sector.

However, the weak civil society in Transnistria reflects not only the hostile attitude of the secessionist authorities but also lack of international support for NGOs. Until one or two years ago support for civil society development in Transnistria was not even on the agenda of international donors. Unlike in Abkhazia (see below), the EU has not been involved in civil society support in Transnistria either. And even now, there is little support for NGOs in Transnistria, except for a few projects financed by mainly Great Britain and eventually the Czech Republic.

Despite the ban on foreign funding, NGOs can receive foreign financial support for their social or educational projects. Moreover, many Transnistrian civil society groups created NGOs which are registered in both Transnistria and Moldova, and they have bank accounts in both Chisinau and Tiraspol. This allows them to apply for foreign funding while remaining less vulnerable to the Transnistrian authorities.

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[11] See Olvia Press, 8 March 2006, http://www.olvia.idknet.com/ol101-03-06.htm and 17 May 2006 http://www.olvia.idknet.com/ol79-05-06.htm Interview with a civil society activist, August 2006, Tiraspol
[12] Interview with a civil society activist, August 2006, Tiraspol Discussion with NGO activist from Transnistria, Brussels, October 2005.
[13] Discussion with NGO activist from Transnistria, Brussels, October 2005.

1.4 Legitimizing de facto statehood

Transnistria's state building project is a comprehensive endeavor, the main aim of which is to build a 'Transnistrian identity'. This is a difficult task. The conflict in Transnistria was not an ethnic one. Transnistria's population consisting of ethnic Moldovans (38%), Ukrainians (28%) and Russian (26%), is the same as in Moldova, though with a slightly different share of ethnic groups. But in any case due to the nature of Transnistrian demography, Transnistria's secessionism and its identity-building project cannot be based on ethnic or religious lines. This has only increased the importance of invoking, manipulating and inventing historic, political and economic arguments in favor of Transnistria's independence. Because the ideological foundations of Transnistrian independence have been shaky, the authorities have always been interested in strictly controlling the formulation of political views inside Transnistria.

Over time, a multilayered discourse justifying Transnistrian independence has emerged. Since there was no overwhelming ethnic, political, economic or historical argument for independence, Transnistria's pro-independence discourse had more elements, than one finds in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Kosovo or Nagorno-Karabakh, which had a strong unifying factor – ethnicity. The independentist discourse in Transnistria discourse seeks to strengthen support for independence in the region and also to convince its population that the economic and political sacrifices they suffer as a result of embarking on a secessionist path are well worth the difficulties.

At the start, Transnistria's separatist project had language issues at its core. The Transnistrian population was mobilized in 1989 as a result of greater assertion by the Moldovans in the Soviet Union of their own language rights, a project that was not shared, and was even opposed by the active, urban and russified parts of the population in Transnistria.[14] The Soviet, and subsequently Russian, authorities also employed Transnistria as a leverage against Moldova's independence in order to keep the 'near abroad' firmly under Russian control. With Moldova's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on 27 August 1991, the desire to stay within the Soviet Union or Russia, and

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[14] For a detailed account of mobilization for independence from Moldova see Ghenadii Kodreanu, 'Dnestrovskij Razlom: Pridnestrovskii krizis i rozhdenie PMR;' available at: http://olvia.idknet.com.

fear of Moldova's unification with Romania came to join the 'language problem' at the forefront of Transnistria's justifications for independence.

However, with time, these justifications have lost relevance. Moldova did not unite with Romania. Minority rights in Moldova proper are reflecting international standards and practices. History, demography, fears of Romania or discrimination remain part of the official discourse of the Transnistrian authorities, but their credibility, both internally and externally has significantly reduced since the beginning of the 1990s. This was evident with the coming to power in Moldova of the Communist Party, which shared with the Transnistrian authorities very similar views on history, language issues, the demise of the Soviet Union, the attitude towards Romania etc. As a result, Transnistria's legitimization discourse has shifted mainly to economic arguments. This decreasing validity of initial justifications also led to increasing authoritarianism, centralization and mobilization in the separatist region, because economic arguments for independence are not enough and do not correspond to reality. It has become therefore all the more important that they are not challenged inside Transnistria.

Still, 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. A typical propagandist slogan says that compared to Moldova Transnistria "is like the Riviera."[15] A second is that if Transnistria joins Moldova it will have to participate in the repayment of Moldovan debts to international institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank. A third point is that Moldova wants Transnistria 'back' in order to privatize Transnistria's industry and benefit from these profits[16] and that Moldova wants Transnistrian companies to pay taxes in Chisinau, from which ordinary Transnistrians would not benefit. Transnistria's self-proclaimed president argues these points bluntly: 'Why do we need Moldova? […] We have a gross domestic product per capita which is three times higher than in Moldova […] That is why Moldova is so

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[15] See http://visitpmr.com/travelreports.html
[16] Igor Smirnov states that 'in pushing Transnistria towards a union with economically bankrupt Moldova,one should give us reliable guarantees that our enterprises will not be given away to repay [Moldova's] debts.' Interview with *Kommersant Moldovy*, 21 September 2001; available at:www.zatulin.ru/institute/sbornik/039/10.shtml.

interested in our property, that is why they always shout about privatization'.[17] Smirnov again: 'We are entirely self-sufficient (…) Moldova does not have enough potential for a self-sufficient existence'.[18]

In fact, Moldova GDP per capita in 2004 was US$760 per capita,[19] while that of Transnistria was US$750 per capita.[20] Both are equally poor, but Transnistria's debt per capita is much higher than that of Moldova. The Republic of Moldova (without Transnistria) has 3.5 million people and a debt of €1.1 billion (US$1.3 billion), while Transnistria with a population of 550,000 people has a debt of €1 billion (US$1,2 billion), two thirds of which are with Russia.[21] Roughly speaking Transnistria's per capita debts are 6 times higher than that of Moldova. Thus, despite all the claims of the authorities, Transnistria is slightly poorer, not richer than Moldova; and far more indebted.

Transnistria's economic arguments for independence do not reflect reality, but are an instance of 'imagined economy',[22] where the very belief that the entity lives better, or would live better than the state it wants to secede from, and not actual economic facts, mobilizes populations in favor of secessionism. Transnistria's prosperity, economic growth and democracy exist only on propagandistic websites. They do not exist in reality, but only in the virtual space of controlled media and PR projects.[23]

1.5 Challenging Authoritarianism?

Transnistrian authoritarianism is increasingly challenged from within. Important internal actors in Transnistria have started to discuss the possibility of alternatives to the current situation. In April-May 2005, a significant group of deputies led by Evgheni Shevchuk, then

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[17] Interview with Igor Smirnov, 'We have to assume responsibilities,' *Pridnestrovie*, 21 April 2005.
[18] ibid.
[19] US Department of State, Background Note on Moldova, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5357.htm
[20] Igor Smirnov, Press conference dedicated to the 'Independence day' of Transnistria, 31 August 2005, http://olvia.idknet.com/ol97-08-05.htm
[21] Centre for Strategic Studies and Reforms, *Research Paper on Transnistria,* Chisinau, November 2003, p.28; available at: http://www.cisr-md.org
[22] See Yoshiko M. Herrera, *Imagined Economies: The Sources of Russian Regionalism,* Cambridge,Cambridge University Press, 2005.
[23] See typical how the "virtual reality" of a democratic, European, pro-Western, rapidly growing economically Transnistria is being developed on such websites as www.visitpmr.com,www.pridnestrovie.net and www.tiraspoltimes.com . All these websites seem to be part of the same network of PR projects. On these PR projects see Vladimir Socor "Dezinformatsiya Alive but Transparent", Eurasia Daily Monitor, 19 July 2006; and "Covering Tracks" in *The Economist,* 3 August2006 and Edward Lucas "Disinformation flows along the Dniestr river", in *European Voice,* 31 August 2006.

deputy speaker of the Transnistrian Supreme Soviet, launched a series of initiatives to limit the powers of the Smirnov-led executive. These initiatives included a change in the constitution that would enhance the powers of the legislature, introduce the post of Prime Minister (Smirnov being currently both President and Prime Minister), and enhance the independence of the judiciary. In December 2005 the Shevchuk-led political movement *Obnovlenie* (Renewal), managed to obtain more seats in the elections to the local parliament than the more pro-Smirnov movement *Respublika.* However, Shevchuk's alleged challenge failed, when it became clear that Smirnov was firmly in control of the levers of influence over politics and the economic groups behind Obnovlenie. Control of the intelligence services and support from Russia were the key factors which allowed Smirnov to reassert his power.

However, the very emergence of such a challenge to Smirnov was interesting in itself. One explanation was that business groups have recognized that they have much to lose economically from the continuing deterioration of the regional situation and obstruction to the negotiation process as well as from Smirnov's authoritarian excesses and human rights abuses (such as during the 'schools crisis' in 2004)[24] – all of these actions have led to the greater international isolation of Transnistria, and ultimately resulted in greater economic pressure being placed on Transnistrian exports, including through the double-checking mechanism in steel, and most important a new border regime introduced by Ukraine in March 2006 whereby Transnistrian companies cannot export without registering with Chisinau authorities. Transnistrian authoritarianism has thus started to hurt real businesses. In these circumstances, these deputies have realized that greater checks and balances were needed to ensure that the authoritarian domination is reined in.

And yet, the political challengers and the economic interests behind them continue to play within the narrow political corridor set by Smirnov, and are careful to stress their loyalty to Smirnov personally. Broadly speaking, despite some maneuvering, they still

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[24] In July 2004 Transnistrian militia attempted to forcibly close down the only five Moldovan schools in the region that were using Latin script. This has affected some 4,200 children who were deprived of their right to study in their mother tongue. The Transnistrian security forces stormed an orphanage in Tighina and a school in Rybnitsa. The OSCE qualified this as 'linguistic cleansing'. The crisis prompted a serious diplomatic crisis with security and economic implications. Moldova tried to apply economic pressure on Transnistria, a dangerous standoff between Moldovan police and Transnistrian militia took place in Tighina/Bender. The crisis ended with Transnistria accepting, under international pressure, the functioning of the schools for another year. For a detailed account of the crisis see Gottfried Hanne and Claus Neukirch, 'Moldovan schools in Transnistria: an uphill battle against "linguistic cleansing"', June 2005, OSCE Magazine.

remain committed to the current authorities, even if this support is less solid than it used to be.

2 Domestic politics in Abkhazia

As the case of Transnistria showed conflict situations are not the kind of environments in which democracy, human rights and pluralism would prosper. In such political environments opposition is often weak and dissenters are readily labeled as supporters of the other side.[25] This is largely true for Abkhazia. However, policy dynamics there are quite different from Transnistria's.

The most spectacular difference is that Abkhazia went through a change in leadership through contested elections in 2004/2005. This is not enough to build a democracy, but it is certainly different from the situation in Transnistria.

In Abkhazia there are certain levels of pluralism in the political debates, and there is a nascent civil society, which is relatively active. Abkhaz even claim that by regional standards they are one of the most democratic entities in the South Caucasus.[26] While this is an exaggeration, compared to growing authoritarianism in Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia, the political processes in Abkhazia are not deteriorating at least. And this is an achievement.

2.1 Presidential Elections in Abkhazia

In 2004 Abkhazia held presidential elections, in parallel with elections in Ukraine which led to the Orange Revolution. The first tour of the elections in Abkhazia took place on 3 October 2004. Already in the electoral campaign the then-prime minister (and former head of local intelligence services and minister of defense) Raul Khajimba was supported by the then president of Abkhazia Vladislav Ardzinba and the government of the Russian Federation. Russian support was at the highest level.

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[25] David Keen, "War and Peace: What's the Difference", in Adekeye Adebajo and Chandra Lekha Sriram (eds.): *Managing Armed Conflicts in the 21st Century* , Frank Cass, London, 2001, p. 7
[26] Interview with a de facto minister of Abkhazia, Sukhumi, March 2006.

On 29 August President Putin met Raul Khajimba in Sochi.[27] After this meeting Raul Khajimba was campaigning with posters depicting him and President Putin shaking hands.[28] A few days before the elections, on Abkhazia's "Victory Day" of 30 September, a big delegation from the Russian State Duma visited Abkhazia and campaigned in favor of Khajimba. Referring to the Putin-Khajimba meeting a Russian expert claimed that "in any Russian region such an unambiguous choice by Putin would have provided a 100% guarantee of the success of the operation "successor" and the coming into power of the person chosen by Kremlin."[29]

However, Raul Khajimba lost elections to his rival Sergei Bagapsh. But Bagapsh's victory was not acknowledged by the electoral commission and the authorities. Apparently, Bagapsh won after the balance of votes was tipped in his favor by the votes of the Georgian-inhabited Gali region of Abkhazia. For two months the two candidates were disputing each other's victory, and the situation degenerated to something close to armed conflict between the supporters of the two contesters. During this standoff Russia firmly supported Khajimba despite the fact that Bagapsh was not less pro-Russian than his rival.[30]

A few days after the elections a Russian state employee (of Abkhaz origin) from the Ministry of Emergency Situations Nodar Hashba was appointed prime minister to try solve the situation by calling new elections (which was the main request of Raul Khajimba).[31] When Bagapsh decided to proceed with his inauguration on 6 December 2004, Russia applied open pressure on Abkhazia to make him accept Khajimba's requests. Without any doubts, the Russian intervention was on behalf of Russian officials. First, Aleksandr Tkachev, the governor of the Russian Krasnadar region bordering Abkhazia, threatened to close the border and stop paying pensions to the residents of Abkhazia if Bagapsh does

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[27] See "Khadjimba in the Bushes" (Khadjimba v kustah), Vremya Novostei, 31 August 2004, http://www.vremya.ru/2004/156/4/106399.html
[28] For the Russian role in the Abkhaz 2004 elections see "Putin Meddles in Abkhazia Presidential Race", Civil Georgia, 31 August 2004, http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=7721
[29] Alexandr Krylov, "The Results of the Abkhaz Elections" (Itogi Vyborov v Abhazii), Carnegie Moscow Center, undated, www.carnegie.ru/ru/pubs/media/8988äîêë%20êàðíåãè%20àáõ.doc
[30] For a paper on Russian policies towards Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria see the author's *Outsourcing de facto statehood: Russia and the secessionist entities in Georgia and Moldova*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Policy Brief 109, July 2006, www.ceps.be .
[31] See "Abhazia bez novogo prezidenta", Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 8 October 2004, http://www.rg.ru/2004/10/08/abhaziya-premier.html

not accept Khajimba's requests for a re-run of the elections.[32] Then Gennady Bukaev, an aid to the Russian prime minister stated that Russia is ready to fully close the border with Abkhazia "in case of further unconstitutional actions by Sergey Bagapsh."[33] On 1 December 2004 he announced that Russia stops the rail communications and blocks the import of agricultural goods to Russia, including mandarins which constitute the main export from Abkhazia during that time of the year.[34]

Another Russian official, deputy-prosecutor general Vladimir Kolesnikov traveled to Abkhazia to mediate between the two contenders, where he stated *inter alia* that Bagapsh's intention to proceed with the inauguration was lacking legitimacy.[35] A Russian nationalist deputy, and deputy speaker of the State Duma Sergei Baburin summarized the then-Russian policy: "The artificial blockade of Abkhazia was undertaken to make Sergei Bagapsh leave".[36]

In the end Russia imposed a deal whereby Bagapsh was accepting to run together with Khajimba for a new (third) round of elections, and Khajimba would become vice-president having in subordination the power ministries. After Bagapsh was re-elected in tandem with Khajimba in January 2005, Bagapsh managed to sideline Khajimba from the main decisions and from control of the power ministries. Bagapsh also rebuilt his relations with Russia.

2.2 Civil society

Civil society in Abkhazia has enjoyed relatively strong support from the international community. There have been many international donors working in the conflict region. For example, between 1997 and 2006 the EU committed some 25 mln euro for projects in Abkhazia. From 2006 the EU became the biggest international donor to Abkhazia, and it was set to double its financial assistance to the region. EU funds were dedicated to

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[32] "Tkachev Prigrozil Sosediam", Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 25 November 2004, http://www.rg.ru/2004/11/25/tkachev-abhazia.html
[33] "Russia threatens to blockade Abkhazia", Civil Georgia, 1 December 2004, http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=8461
[34] "Karantin na mandariny" Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 2 December 2004, http://www.rg.ru/2004/12/02/suhumipoezd.html
[35] "Vladimir Kolesnikov: Inaguratsia Sergeya Bagapsha nelegitimnoe meropriatie", Regnum.ru, 4 December 2004, http://www.regnum.ru/news/371013.html
[36] "Baburin obvinil Rossiiskuiu storonu v iskusstvennoi blokade Abhazii", Regnum.ru, 6 December

rehabilitation of the conflict zones and support for civil society development.[37] For a comparison, no EU funding was ever allocated for civil society support in Transnistria.

In Abkhazia civil society still faces problems with the authorities, but civil society groups have much greater room for activity than in Transnistria. There is a high degree of mistrust of NGOs and their international donors in Abkhazia, and especially from the part of certain quarters in the *de facto* authorities,[38] particularly the highly influential military and intelligence services. However, since 2005 there have been some positive trends in the attitude of the authorities towards the NGOs and the media in Abkhazia. In any case due to an active civil society and considerable international support, the authorities have been more and more tolerant of civil society activism. In addition Bagapsh has been appreciative and supportive of civil society activism in Abkhazia.[39]

Despite difficult circumstances, civil society has been present in the life of the region. A civil society activist interviewed in Sukhumi claimed that there are some 10-15 active NGOs in Abkhazia, and 5-6 of them being very active.[40] Considering the size, state of the economy and international isolation of Abkhazia, this is a rather high number of active NGOs for a region of 250.000 people. Despite the fact that Transnistria's population is more than double of Abkhazia, it has less active and genuinely independent NGOs, and anyway most of them try to work on politically neutral issues.

Civil society in Abkhazia also publishes a periodic journal,[41] has more or less regular civil society roundtables where political issues are discussed openly, and even monitored the 2004 elections by creating a broad NGO Coalition "For fair elections" in Abkhazia. This would be unthinkable in Transnistria.

Certainly, a better developed civil society in Abkhazia and greater international support was partly due to the consequences of war which was incomparably more brutal and longer than in Transnistria. This meant that there was a greater international humanitarian

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2004,http://www.regnum.ru/news/371834.html
[37] See *Overview of European Commission Assistance in Abkhazia and South Ossetia*, update, July 2006.http://www.delgeo.cec.eu.int/en/programmes/rehabilitation.html
[38] Anaid Gogoryan and Asida Adleyba, "Stanovlenie NPO Abkhazii: dostizhenia, problemy i perspektivy",7 July 2006, http://southcaucasus.com/index.php?page=current&id=581
[39] See the annual "Address of the President of the Republic of Abkhazia to the People's Assembly - Parliament", Sukhumi, 25 February 2006.
[40] Author's discussions with civil society activists, Sukhumi, March 2006.
[41] See an Abkhaz journal called "Grazhdanskoe Obshestvo" (Civil society) that appears regularly as a mouthpiece of the NGO community in Sukhumi, http://www.abhazia.org/mag.htm

interest in helping the population of Abkhazia to overcome at least some of the post-war hardships.[42] Moreover, NGOs, with international support but not only, were crucial in overcoming some of the consequences of war, and there was a much greater humanitarian and social need of these structures, as they dealt with such issues as humanitarian assistance, environment, helping displaced people, demining activities, lobbying on behalf of war veterans, education, overcoming psychological trauma (especially of children), human rights monitoring, conflict analysis, supporting the media, civil society development and democratization.[43]

2.3 Abkhazia's weak regime

Somehow favorable to such pluralistic developments was the fact that the political regime in Abkhazia is weak. Lucan Way argued in relation to Moldova that the "immediate source of political competition is not a robust civil society, strong democratic institutions, or democratic leadership but incumbent incapacity […] Politics remain competitive because the government is too polarized and the state too weak to monopolize political control."[44] This also applies to cases of greater post-soviet pluralism such as Georgia, Ukraine, and partly Kirghizstan. Abkhazia appears to have the same structural weaknesses, which favor political pluralism. Thus, to some extent Abkhazia, is also a case of "failed authoritarianism"[45] where the authorities were too weak to impose authoritarian control, while the society was able to oppose such tendencies. The presidential elections in 2004 were a proof of that.

However the weakness of the political regime has its prices. Abkhazia seems to much less of a functioning entity than Transnistria. There are little social services, little order, very high criminality, and for years after the war Abkhazia was still facing various groups of landlords involved in criminal activities and challenging the authorities' claim to control the

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[42] Sometimes these followed international, not local priorities. An Abkhaz "joke" even says that immediately after the war there were many international NGO's doing human rights training for peasants to the extent that some were trained for several times. The problem was that the same peasants needed food, not human rights training.
[43] Susan Allen Nan, "Civil Activities", in *Accord* , September 1999, published by Conciliation Resources, www.c-r.org
[44] Lucan Way, Weak States and Pluralism: The case of Moldova, East European Politics and Societies, 17:3, 2003.
[45] Ibid.

territory of the whole Abkhazia. The Abkhaz *de facto* state in fact does not reach to many areas it claims its own. The difficult geography of a mountainous region and traditions of independentist mountaineers makes it more difficult.

2.4 Ethnocratic Pluralism

The democratic picture in Abkhazia would look good by regional standards, but for one very significant factor. Crucial elements of democracy that exist in Abkhazia such as political pluralism, relatively active civil society, contested elections, pluralistic media, an emerging dialogue between civil society and the authorities, open opposition activities, are for only parts of the Abkhaz population. Elements of democracy in Abkhazia exist, but the ethnic Georgians, who account for roughly a third of the population, have been excluded from such developments.

So far Abkhazia has been an ethnically exclusive secessionist projects. Their secessionist movements have been defined predominantly in ethnic terms of a struggle against the Georgians. Michael Mann argues that "modern ethnic cleansing is the dark side of democracy when ethnonationalist movements claim the state for their own *ethnos,* which they initially intend to constitute as a democracy, but then they seek to exclude and cleanse others."[46] Thus, the secessionist entity of Abkhazia became self-governing only after expelling more than 200.000 of Georgians.

In some respect what has developed in Abkhazia is a "collective ethnic ownership of land." A central pillar of the secessionist project in Abkhazia is the idea of "our land", which posits that only an ethnos is entitled to be the supreme owner of the land.[47] The notion of 'the people' has become entwined with an *ethnos,* rather than a *demos* as is commonly the case in Western democracies.[48] Thus, in the local interpretation it is an ethnos that 'owns' the land, rather than all the inhabitants of the contested areas.

Derluguian also traces the very start of the conflict to the fact that "After 1989 the prospect of competitive elections and market reform appeared as a direct threat to

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[46] Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 503
[47] Sergey Markedonov "Zemlia i Volia" (Russian version) or "Unrecognized geopolitics" (English version), Russia in Global Affairs Nr 1, 2006, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/14/999.html
[48] See Mann, op. cit, pp. 3-4 and 504 for a development of the argument on the difference between *ethnos* and *demos*.

Abkhazes… Vastly outnumbered Abkhazes stood no chance against the Georgian in the coming competitive elections, and thus could expect to lose their power over state appointments in Abkhazia."[49]

In Abkhazia only one *ethnos* owns the land, and one *ethnos* is the source of sovereignty and political power. Virtually all governmental posts are held by ethnic Abkhaz. In fact the Abkhazes are a "dominant minority" in the secessionist region. For a comparison, before the 1992-1993 conflict ethnic Abkhaz were less than a fifth of the total population, and even now they are likely to be just over a third of the population, although reliable demographic data is unknown. In Sukhumi, the Abkhaz capital, only 7 percent of the population before the 1992-1993 war were ethnic Abkhaz.[50] Certainly the basis of the current reality is that most Georgians have fled the region after the victory if the secessionists in 1993. In fact the current *de facto* statehood of Abkhazia rests very much on the precedent of expulsion of Georgians. The UN Security Council has condemned "the ethnic killings and continuing human rights violations committed in Abkhazia, Georgia."[51] Derluguian explained the terror strategy of ethnic cleansing employed by Abkhaz with the fact that it is the "weapon of the organizationally weak", because ethnic cleansing aims at maximizing "the effect of a force of limited capability. A small irregular military that had no power to police the conquered Georgian civilians sought to drive out the potentially hostile population, and thereby in the long run to change the demographic balance through acts of conspicuous brutality."[52]

Today, even the ethnic Armenians and Russians leaving in Abkhazia, and who were loyal to the Abkhaz secessionist movement, are visibly under-represented in the *de facto* governmental structures. Despite the fact that there are surprisingly high levels of pluralism in Abkhazia, one can talk an ethnocracy, i.e. democracy for one ethnic group, rather than of a proper democracy.

On the positive side is that the problematic nature of an ethnocratic polity started to be acknowledged by a few in Abkhazia. Those who recognize that come from civil society background. Iraklii Khintba, an Abkhaz political scientist, acknowledges the problematic

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[49] Georgi Derluguian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, University of Chicago Press, 2005, p.236.
[50] See Derluguian, *op. cit.*, p .236. I deliberately use a non-Georgian source for this data.
[51] UN Security Council resolution on Georgia, Abkhazia, 1036, 12 January 1996.
[52] Derluguian, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

nature of "The *de facto* instauration in Abkhazia of an ethnocracy, where practically all positions in politics and the economy are controlled by Abkhazes."[53]

Beslan Kmuzov, an Abkhaz journalist stated that "there are more Armenians than Abkhazians there. By the way, even Georgians population prevails, however they are not allowed to take any offices. Abkhazians are the only part of the population that lives in freedom."[54] Acknowledging such contentious issues publicly is a difficult thing in Abkhazia.

2.5 The Economy of Secessionism

Abkhazia is under blockade from Georgia, and a formal economic blockade from the CIS, which is not enforced. Abkhazia survives mainly because of Russian tourists, Russia paying pensions to significant parts of the population, and individual entrepreneurial activities mainly in the tourist sector – from providing accommodation in private houses and flats, to selling souvenirs.

Another type of central economic activity for Abkhazia is the export of clementines, nuts and other fruits to Russia. But these exports are conducted mainly semi-legally by individuals on a very small-scale basis. These are not industries, but individual people to transport such products into Russia. Thus, Abkhazia's economy is very fragmented. Individual entrepreneurial activity, not big scale businesses, is the basis of an atomized economy. People have to struggle and survive on their own.

3 Democracy in secessionism

It is not surprising that different secessionist entities have different levels of democracy. However, an analysis of (un)democratic developments in the secessionist entities of the former soviet union, is not irrelevant. These secessionist entities share many common traits – in the way they emerged as secessionist entities, and in the way they survived after that. A comparison of democratic developments in Abkhazia and Transnistria allows to identify a number of factors that influence the way some secessionist entities develops,

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[53] See Iraklii Khintba "Puti k priznaniu nezavisimosti Abkhazii", *Grazhdanskoe Obshestvo*, Nr. 59, 2005, p. 4. Downloadable at http://www.abhazia.org/mag/mag2005_59/mag2005_59_04.htm. The article develops the argument that the ethnocratic nature of the Abkhaz polity affects its chances of international recognition.
[54] Prime News, "There Is No Opposition Loyal To Georgia In Abkhazia, Abkhazian Journalist Says", 17 April

and to answer the question as to why some secessionists are more democratic than others?

First, ethnicity plays a role. Abkhazes can afford more political pluralism because they are more ethnically homogenous. There is a basic consensus in Abkhazia of the imperative of secession. Since this basic bottom line is not challenged by almost anybody internally, Abkhazes can afford greater debates and pluralism, because these would not challenge the secession imperative. Power and opposition, civil society groups and independent minded media, alleged pro-Russians and pro-Westerners, would-be democrats and authoritarian conservatives are all equally in favor of independence from Georgia. This basic consensus made possible more debates and political pluralism on other issues, since debates would not question the foundations of the whole secessionist project.

In Transnistria the situation is different. Its legitimacy is shaky. Open discussions, free media and a more democratic political process would probably challenge some of the basic myths around which Transnistria is created – that of economic prosperity relative to Moldova, that of an undemocratic Moldova willing to reunite with Romania and ready to prosecute Russian-speakers. Thus the Transnistrian regime feels less secure, and opted for a safety belt which is the region's authoritarianism. However, in both secessionist entities Moldovans and Georgian and basically excluded from the political process and discriminated. And this phenomenon is more accentuated in Abkhazia than in Transnistria. To a certain extent Abkhazia can be more democratic because it is an ethnopolity.

Second, Abkhazia's main objective is independence, while Transnistria's leadership main objective is to maintain power, as an independent entity or as part of a (con)federated Moldova. It is not uncommon in Abkhazia to hear that the more democratic Abkhazia will be, the greater its chances to gain international recognition. Thus, many in Abkhazia think that building a democratic entity will help to legitimize its secession and quest for independence.[55] Transnistria's argumentation is diametrically opposed. President Smirnov openly states that he will retire "only after Transnistria will be recognized"

2006, Tbilisi.

[55] Interviews with de facto officials and civil society activist in Sukhumi, March 2006.

internationally.[56] Considering that this is a rather unrealistic prospect, it becomes obvious that staying in power is the primary goal of Transnistria's leadership.

Third, the structure of the economy influences democratic developments. A generally accepted argument is that the more prosperous a state is, the more likely it is to be democratic. This is not so straightforward. In the former Soviet Union Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan are more prosperous than Georgia, Kirghizstan or Moldova. But these poorer state are also more democratic. How to explain this paradox? The presence of natural resources is a factor, but more important is the structure of the economy. In countries with concentrated economies dominated by a few companies/clans/oligarchs, it is easier to consolidate authoritarian rule, than in countries with a GDP produced by small and medium enterprises, even if they are poorer. The paradox is that sometimes being poorer does not necessarily mean having less chances to be democratic.

The same rule seems to apply to Transnistria and Abkhazia. Transnistria's economy is concentrated around a few enterprises, while Abkhazia is so poor that its whole GDP is produced by small economic units and private entrepreneurs (mainly in the tourist sector), which are less dependent on the authorities. Transnistria's concentration of the economy makes it both possible and feasible the control of the economy and the politics by an authoritarian leadership. It is possible to enforce authoritarian control because the security apparatus can easily control or coerce a dozen big businessmen which create almost the whole Transnistrian GDP. It also creates an incentive for such a control, because in an authoritarian regime it is easier to extract corrupt profits from a dozen big business groups. In a more fragmented (and poorer) economy it is more difficult to control the economic agents, because no security apparatus can centralize control of tens of thousands of people involved in small scale business activities. That is how the poorer Abkhazia scores better in terms of democracy than the relatively more prosperous Transnistria. Thus, in such a model not prosperity, but economic concentration defines how democracy evolves.[57]

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[56] See Regnum.ru, "Prezident Pridnestrovya poobeshchal chto ne uidet na pensiu", 4 September 2006,http://regnum.ru/news/699206.html ; and Olvia Press 4 September 2006, http://www.olvia.idknet.com/ol30-09-06.htm.
[57] See Thomas De Waal's arguments in favor of recognising Abkhaz independence in "Kosovo talks about much more than just Kosovo", Financial Times, 10 May 2006, and "Abkhazia-Georgia, Kosovo-Serbia: parallel worlds?" debate between Thomas de Waal and Zeyno Baran, 2 August 2006, www.openemocracy.net.

Fourth, international support matters. In Abkhazia significant funds for almost ten years have been offered for civil society support by the international community. This was not unproblematic. NGOs have been accused of working for foreign forces hostile to Abkhazia. However, despite suspicions of civil society activities, and their sources of foreign funding, external support for Abkhazia's civil society was crucial in its development as it allowed for the institutional development of NGOs. Inside Transnistria the internal political situation was less favorable to NGOs than in Abkhazia, but also foreign support has been practically non-existent. This is also one of the factors explaining the relative weakness of civil society in Transnistria compared to Abkhazia.

Fifth, Abkhazia is less of a functioning entity than Transnistria. Transnistria's de facto state authorities control the entire region, both geographically and functionally. These de facto authorities, and their unreformed intelligence services, do control the economy and politics of Transnistria. Abkhazia is different. The presence of the de facto authorities in the everyday life of the inhabitants of the region is not all-pervasive, and the secessionist authorities do not control the whole territory of Abkhazia. So in some respect Transnistria has a strong system of all-pervasive authoritarian power like Belarus, while Abkhazia's weak and incapacitated institutions and polarized elites meant that civil society and pluralism had more political space to assert themselves, resulting in greater political pluralism.

One of the results of Abkhazia's greater pluralism is that its arguments for secession and international credibility are much greater than that of Transnistria.[56] To a certain extent international support for civil society resulted in the emergence of a credible force advocating Abkhazia's secession. However, one cannot but notice that Abkhaz civil society, albeit pro-independence, is also more open to some kind of reconciliation with Georgia and ethnic Georgians than other internal political or societal actors which have been less exposed to the international circuit of ideas.

Despite divergent levels of pluralism, democracy is not at home in the secessionist entities. This is the case almost everywhere in the world, even though there are a few notable exceptions. Often secessionist entities are less democratic than the states they try to secede. Transnistria is less democratic than Moldova, Abkhazia is less democratic than Georgia, Northern Cyprus is less democratic than the Republic of Cyprus in the South, and Tamil Eelam is less democratic than Sri-Lanka. Political rulers tend to overstay.

President Denktash has been a leader of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus since 1974 and between 1964 -1974 leader of the Turkish community and vice-president of the still united Cyprus. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelan are "ruthless, authoritarian and completely ideological", they have no democratic accountability. [58] And the case of Transnistria has been already described.

The "democracy deficit" in secessionist entities results from their reliance on sentiments of fear and insecurity. Many secessionist entities develop "under siege" mentalities because in the minds of peoples in these regions war is a distinct possibility. An Abkhaz deputy prime-minister puts it that "Everybody in the South Caucasus lives in the expectation of a real war. War is not something imaginary, but a real expectation for us."[59] Such feelings are sometimes well-grounded, but sometimes just an excuse for mobilization and authoritarian centralization. The state fear and insecurity impacts on the way societies develop in the secessionist entities. In such claustrophobic and closed environments, with small territories, little money, no jobs, constant fear of war, lack of possibilities to travel, high emigration, it is more difficult than ever to build democratic regimes.

However, it is not secessionism itself that impedes democracy, but lack of basic security that encourages a "fortress under siege" syndrome and feelings of fear and insecurity that makes it difficult to develop democracies. The psychological state of war, sometimes more real and sometimes not, is often an excuse for extraordinary concentrations of powers.

Conclusions

A first glance at the political and economic realities in Transnistria and Abkhazia, would suggest that the former should have greater levels of democracy and pluralism than the later. However, this is not so.

In Transnistria there is no credible opposition, no active civil society, foreign funding for NGOs is formally prohibited, and all this is policed by a strong repressive apparatus guided by the ministry of state security. Transnistria's economy is highly concentrated and even if

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[58] Singer, M.R., "New Realities in Sri Lankan Politics", *Asian Survey* 30, 1990, pp. 417, quoted in Scott Pegg *International Society and the De Facto State*, 1998, Ashgate, Brookfield, p. 79.
[59] Interview with de facto deputy prime minister of Abkhazia, Sukhumi, 17 March 2006.

big businesses are dissatisfied with the current political leadership they do not dare to challenge the authoritarian leader who was a de facto president of the region for a decade and a half. Transnistria's ethnic composition is not very different from that of Moldova. Thus Transnistria could not mobilize the population in favor of secession from Moldova using ethnic fears and insecurities.

Abkhazia is a different story. It is certainly not a "beacon of democracy", but is enjoys greater levels of pluralism than in Transnistria. It had contested elections in 2004/2005 which were won by the opposition. Its civil society is active and rather developed by regional standards. Political debates are rather open, and civil society enjoys strong international financial support. But Abkhazia's achievements in this area are for only parts of the Abkhaz population. Elements of democracy in Abkhazia exist, but the ethnic Georgians, who account for roughly a third of the population, have been excluded from such developments. Thus Abkhazia's pluralism is in fact a ethnocracy, i.e. democracy for one ethnic group. And still even Abkhazia's "lame pluralism" is surprising compared to what one finds in Transnistria. What accounts for this difference?

There are five factors that explain Abkhazia's greater pluralism compared to that of Transnistria. Firstly, Abkhazia is a project of ethnic secessionism. Thus, Abkhazes can afford more pluralism because they are more ethnically homogenous, and nobody challenges the need for secession. In Transnistria the situation is different. It has no ethnic divide from Moldova, and the elites could not support ethnic mobilization against Moldova. Thus the Transnistrian regime feels less secure, and opted for a safety belt which is the region's authoritarianism. Second, Abkhazia thinks that more democracy will increase its chances for international recognition. While Transnistria's leadership main objective is to stay in power no matter what. Third, Transnistria's industrialized, but concentrated economy made it feasible and profitable for the authorities to control through the security apparatus the economic agents. Abkhazia's destroyed economy and reliance on individual entrepreneurial activities makes is less feasible to control tens of thousands of people who do not rely on the authorities for their survival. Fourth, Abkhazia's civil society has benefited from significant international support, while support for Transnistria's NGOs has been hardly existent. Fifth, Abkhazia is less of a functioning entity than Transnistria. Transnistria's de facto state authorities control the entire region, both geographically and

functionally, while Abkhazia has a very weak political regime which could not impose authoritarian rule.

Despite varying levels of political pluralism, democracy is not at home in both secessionist entities. Insecurity discourses are a permanent feature of Abkhazia and Transnistria which contributes to the development of a "fortress under siege" syndrome which hampers democratic developments and conflict settlement. Thus any efforts to support the resolution of these conflicts should include a more measures to support democracy and reconciliation.

Recommendations

To the European Union:

- Facilitate access of Transnistrian NGOs to EU funds under European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR),
- Start financing NGOs activities in Transnistria,
- Expand funding for educational support in Abkhazia and Transnistria, *inter alia* through the funding of university courses about the history, politics and institutions of the EU,
- Support the creation of European Information Centers or Europe Houses in both Abkhazia and Transnistria,
- Provide more information about existing EU programs and funding opportunities in Abkhazia and especially in Transnistria,
- Involve students from Abkhazia and Transnistria in EU academic exchange programs with its neighbors,
- Commission a feasibility study on how to include the secessionist entities in the European Neighborhood Policy,
- Fund more joint Georgian-Abkhaz projects to support reconciliation.

To Georgia and Moldova:

- Seek the inclusion of the secessionist entities into the European Neighborhood Policy,
- Share as many of the benefits of ENP with the secessionist entities as possible, from guaranteed quotas in academic exchanges to the possibility to benefit from better trade regimes with the EU.

To the secessionist entities:

- Transnistria should revoke its ban on foreign funding of NGOs,

- Abkhazia and Transnistria should seek ways to unilaterally start implementing some of the provisions of the European Neighborhood Policy,
- Abkhazia should make it possible for foreigners to travel into Abkhazia without a clearance from the de facto foreign ministry.