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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**

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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 159649 keystrokes long (including spaces)

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.

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Acronyms

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

UNPO Unrepresented Nations and People Organization

Abstract: This Master's thesis focuses on the relationship of the Russian Federation with Post Soviet De Facto States since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The purpose is to give a cross-case comparison of factors of the two cases: the PMR and Abkhazia. Both of the case studies have their unique sets of challenges and common obstacles towards their respective state-building. The central focus and aim will be to examine any key developments in their relationships with the Russian Federation since 2014. Russia's role as a patron state and their soft power tactics towards their compatriots will also be examined in this study. Various concepts of the patron state relationship are going to be point of focus as well. The issue of whether or not the patron state hinders or helps de facto states in their state-building comes into question

Chapter 1: Introduction

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1.1 The situation

¹ Map of the dispute territories within the CIS: Credit Euroactiv

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 provoked numerous reactions among the international community. The annexation was 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. However, was it a wakeup call? Six 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 declaring its official recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and continued its maintenance of peacekeeping forces and economic support over these .states (Asmsus 2010:109)

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 distracted the world from Russia's resurgence. It was not ignored, but there were other issues on the international scope that was 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 that 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*" It only took a couple of years for the Moscow to resurface as 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 following primary question following the Crimea annexation was "Which territory is Russia going to annex next?" At present, the post-Soviet area is the macro region with the highest concentration of de facto states in the world.² .The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the establishment of four de facto states and many separatist territories within the Russia Federation and the CIS. 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 Nagorno Karabakh. The Russian Federation directly supports all of these entities economically and militarily except for the Republic of Artsakh which is supported indirectly via Russia's support of Armenia.

The other three de facto states that receive direct patronage from the Russian Federation are breakaway states from Georgia and Moldova. These frozen conflicts hold a relative geopolitical interest for Moscow. Moscow believes that by supporting these states, it sways the geopolitical position of their parent states. Their parent states are signatories of the European Union's Eastern Partnership. Of the six states in the European Union's Eastern Partnership, only two—Armenia and Belarus—do not have unresolved conflicts on their territory. Not coincidentally, they are the only two that are members of the Russian-led Collective Security

Treaty Organization, and who plan to join the Eurasian Union.(Woods:2016:42) The other four all aspire to closer ties to the West.

There is already an exhaustive number of 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. How does the annexation affect the mindset of the residents in these de facto states? There hasn't been much change in these de facto states in the last 25 years ago. As time passes, it makes it increasingly difficult to implement their state-building mechanisms. Russia's active role as a patron state ensures the survival of these de facto states, but the contributions towards their state-building are debatable. Could the Russian Federation formally annex one of these territories next? Russia's patronage to these de facto states causes many to speculate what could be the next annexation.

1.2 Aims and Research questions

This research has several main aims. The first is to examine the concept of the patron state relationships from secondary sources and apply how the Russian Federation acts as a patron state. While it is assumed that the assistance of a patron state is vital to a state's survival, but there is a point to where a de facto state is 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 and Palestine have been more successful in achieving the widespread

international recognition that the two case studies. The PMR and Republic of Abkhazia have very minimal or no success in obtaining international recognition.

The second aim is to pick up from the first aim. The aim to examine the Russian Federation itself and how it interacts with frozen conflicts in its near abroad. In order to understand this patron state relationship, it is crucial to look at the foreign policy positions that the Russian Federation has within its near abroad. It is also necessary to examine at the Russian compatriot policies, and how they were formed and implemented by various soft power mechanisms. These policies have to give the Russian Federation the specific tools to justify its intervention in these conflict and reassert itself to the International community.

The final aim which is the main aim to answer the central research questions to this study is to evaluate the relationship the Russian Federation has with the PMR and Republic of Abkhazia since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Specifically, to give a cross-comparison analysis to determine and identify any critical developments in the relationship with the Russian Federation of both of the case studies since the annexation of Crimea.

1.2.2. Key questions

1. How has 2014 annexation of Crimea by affected the relationship that the Russian Federation has with the de facto states it supports?
2. How much does Russian patronage to these de facto states contribute towards their state building?

Sub Questions

1. How much does Moscow benefit from the status quo situation maintaining the role of a patron state in these frozen conflicts?
2. How effective are the Russian compatriot policies and soft power mechanisms in maintaining the status quo of de facto states ?

Hypotheses

1. The annexation of Crimea has not significantly affected the Russian Federation's relationship with these case studies in the short-term situation.
2. The Russian Federation's role in supporting the de facto creates a one-sided dependency on them which in turn becomes an obstacle in their state building.

Sub-hypotheses

1. The Russian Federation would prefer that these de facto states maintain the status quo because it benefits from.
2. The compatriot policies set by Moscow and Russian soft power mechanisms are both useful in ensuring that the de facto states in keeping the status quo.

1.2.3. The scope of the work

The second chapter will address the selected methodology and theoretical framework chosen for this research. The third chapter will examine various concepts of patron state relationships from and apply how the concepts of how the Russian Federation acts as a patron state. The fourth chapter addresses the compatriot policies of the Russian Federation and how they were formed. These compatriot policies along with various soft power mechanisms have given the Russian Federation the tools it needs to implement its strategic motivation to reassert itself and achieve its goals within it near abroad in particular to the case studies.

The fifth and sixth chapters are the case studies. The fifth one being the Republic of Abkhazia and the sixth one being the PMR³. The case studies follow the same format. Each of the case studies includes: A basic history, current geopolitical situation, general consensus of their relationship with the Russian Federation, key developments since 2014, their geopolitical value to the Russian Federation and a brief conclusion. The seventh chapter is the conclusion which will compare the findings from the case studies and finish with a brief critical outlook.

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. The de facto state views itself as capable of entering into relations with other states, and it seeks full constitutional

³ The PMR is used interchangeably with Transnistria throughout the thesis

independence and widespread international recognition as a sovereign state. (Pegg 26 1998)

.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.⁴ The term de facto state is often used interchangeably with the term Quasi-state. Other interchangeable terms can be "Breakaway state," "Unrecognized state" 'Separatist states or "contested states" 'Racketeer state." The majority of the de facto states were formed as a result of unresolved armed ethnic or ethnopolitical conflicts between a central government and a separatist movement.(Kolsto 2006 730)

Right to self-determination :The concept of 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 an international status with no political interference based on respect for equal rights and fair equality of opportunity⁵(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.

⁴ Dov Lynch 2004;

⁵ UN charter: article 1

Compatriot: Moscow created the term "sootchestvennik" which translates to "compatriot,"⁶ (Girgas 2015 :125). 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 frequently used interchangeably.

1.4 Relevance and value of the research

The Russian Federation's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and annexation of Crimea in 2014 are both commonly viewed in a very black and white setting. There are two popular competing narratives for the causation of these events. 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 a pretense to invade neighboring countries. (Mankoff 2014;64) The other shows it is merely trying to protect itself and near abroad from NATO encroachment. (Mearsheimer 2014) Regardless of either narrative, the geopolitical move of Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine are very crucial for Moscow. The developments on what happens in these minor separatist regions have a more of a significant effect on the foreign policy for Moscow, Washington, and Brussels than given credit. When studying these conflicts beneath the surface, the situation with these de facto states are not entirely black or white issue, 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 initially coined in the cold war? The value of this study is to

provide an analysis of how much of development there has been regarding the Russian Federation and other de facto states since the annexation of Crimea.

Another value to this study is that it can offer a different perspective on the subject of de facto states. The majority of literature on this subject follow the same theoretical framework. Sometimes a different theoretical framework can help shed light on underlooked aspects of state patronage. Subsequently, this study can further evaluate the complicated relationship that de facto states have with their patron state. The study calls into question of whether or not patron states are more of a help or hindrance, not just on the de facto state but the patron state itself.

Lastly, this study may also contribute to the idea that a hybrid theory in select cases can be useful in understanding the patron state relationship. It has been a widely accepted notion that a positivist theory and constructive ontology are irreconcilable with one another. This study could potentially serve as an example where theories can have bridges and not walls.

Chapter 2 Methodological and theoretical scope

This chapter will reflect on the methodology and theories used in this research. The first part of the chapter will examine the methods and explain how the empirical data was 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. The second part of the chapter will discuss the theory that the case studies are based on and the reasoning it was chosen.

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 The selection of the cases

A two-case cross qualitative interpretive paradigm approach was chosen to address the central question and the sub-question. One of the main benefits of using cross-case analysis is that it is less limiting than a single case variable study. The second benefit is that using a cross-case analysis especially in qualitative research is that it helps to offer more in-depth insight into the 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) .A Case study approach can facilitate critical thinking skills. One can learn while doing research on how to understand and discover different aspects of the cases and how they are interconnected. This ushers in a deeper comprehension of the issue and bridges the gap between not just understand the "how" and 'what' aspects, but also the "why" aspects.

There are a couple of limitations in using a cross-case analysis. One of the biggest critiques 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. Multiple cases can also hold too many tangents and outliers. However, a single case can be too limiting. The PMR and the Republic of Abkhazia are chosen as the two case studies are for the following reasons. The first reason is they have all the underlying commonalities of de facto states. They both meet the other requirements for statehood prescribed by the Montevideo convention except for the last one which is the capability to form relations with other nations.

The second reason is that these cases have some similar characteristics. They are roughly similar regarding population and are both ethnically diverse to an extent. The populations of both of the case studies are disputed, but estimates put the population roughly between 200,000-400,000. (Rummer 2017:3) They both have tensions with their respective parent states. 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 ⁷ (Grigas 2016:97)) Moldova and Georgia are both signatories of association agreements with the European Union and have expressed a desire for NATO membership. Both experience numerous problems and obstacles from isolation due to their de facto statehood status.

⁷ Georgia 2003 Moldova 2009

. Abkhaz 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 2015:890) Another correlation is that in both of the case studies that both of their respective parent states are transitioning from an authoritarian regime to a democracy. They are what is known as a "hybrid regime (Levitksy and Way 2015;5)

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 (Bakkistrud Kolsto 2011) 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 mainly ideological.⁸ Some scholars argue that the conflict had some elements of ethnic conflict for with the PMR, but not at all to the same level as Abkhazia. Tiraspol and Sukhumi have different motivations for their reliance on Moscow. The case studies will highlight these motivations in greater detail.

South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh are omitted from this research for a few reasons. The first being that they do not share as many of the same characteristic features previously listed. They both have a much smaller population and have nearly no ethnic diversity. Nagorno Karabakh is also an entirely different case from the other three. The Russian Federation does not directly support it. Its patron state is Armenia. There can be a case made that because Yerevan receives a high amount of aid and subsidies from Moscow that Moscow indirectly supports Stepanakert. It is also left out because Armenia remains in a favorable position with Georgia and Moldova the Russian Federation. Armenia did not have a color revolution. Armenia is a loyal

⁸ IBID

member of the EEU and CSTO. The reasons for contention with its parent state of Azerbaijan is also different.

2.2 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 involves different methods. The methods and data collection used in this studies case studies follow a qualitative -interpretive paradigm. The benefits of qualitative analysis are that there are more richness and detail in the data that the qualitative analysis overlooks. It is desirable on a small scale research projects because it draws on the interpretive skills of the researcher, opens up the possibility of more than one explanation being valid. Rather than a presumption that there must be, in theory at least, one correct explanation, it allows for the possibility that different researchers might reach different conclusions, despite using broadly the same methods. The disadvantage is that these findings can be too general. An in-depth study of a small number of instances is that it becomes more difficult to establish how far the findings may be generalized to other similar instances(Denscombe 2010;55-57) The methods used are participant observation, interpretive research, and analysis of secondary sources.

2.2.1 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 as 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 had a set of questions to answer. This interview was in a questionnaire format. Some of the questions were the same such as each "foreign ministry." One example is "How has the relationship with the PMR/Abkhazia the Russian Federation changed since the annexation of Crimea in 2014?" There were also different questions given 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 interview aimed to discuss both the strategic and historical elements of the frozen conflict. Unfortunately, there was not an opportunity to interview a subject from the Georgian embassy.

There was a series of informal interviews conducted in person for the second case study. A hospitality networking site called Couchsurfing chose the second group interviewees. 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 of subjects in Sukhumi, but the logistics in going there were too complicated and costly. There is not a strict requirement to travel to Transnistria. The process is relatively simple compared to Abkhazia. Transnistria does not require a visa for any passport holders. Everyone is required to register with the police at the border, and he or she gets 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 is that often the subject can offer some insight to issues that the researcher might not have previously thought of before. Other benefits to using interviews are that one can gain a certain amount of insight from the subjects at first hand that could be gained from media or other written sources. Freedom of the press is insufficient in both Abkhazia and Transnistria. Freedom house gives Transnistria a rating of " Not free," while Abkhazia has a rating of partly free. (Freedom house 2017: Profiles Abkhazia and Transnistria) Personal narratives can potentially offer more than media sources coming from places where freedom of the press is limited. 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 go and ask them what it is they want to know and get the information 'straight from the horse's mouth.(Descombe 2010;172)

There are a few disadvantages that come with participant observation. The first reason is that some of the answers are likely to become skewed and not always represent the will of the majority. The main weakness in the in-person interviews for Transnistria was that the subjects were chosen on a travel hospitality network. The observed subjects were willing to interact with an outsider and able to communicate sufficiently in English. Their knowledge of English signaled that they had more level of exposure to the outside world. This can cause their responses to be more anecdotal than the rest of the community.

Finding subjects that represent the general outlook is 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 issue can pose a problem

in a country that has problems with authoritarianism. The subject might become self-conscious or anxious about having their behavior scrutinized by the researcher and consequently alter their behavior in some way. This is known as the observer effect. (Denscombe 2010:172)

2.2.2 Interpretive research and secondary data analysis

The research for this thesis follows an interpretive paradigm, which is primarily concerned with developing insights into people's beliefs and lived experiences through the use of qualitative data.⁹(Denscombe 2014). The interview reflects this along with some of the secondary sources of data. Aikenhead states that observation and interpretation underpin the interpretive paradigm, so to observe is to collect information about events, while interpret is to making meaning of that information by drawing inferences or by judging the match between the information and some abstract pattern. (Aikenhead 1997) This is helpful in creating connections between the case studies

The limitations of using an interpretive paradigm is that it can become too subjective. Denscombe states that the paradigm is "*generally skeptical about the prospects of achieving objectivity, arguing that researchers' thinking will inevitably be shaped to some extent by their own experiences and identities as members of the social world within which their research takes place.*".(Denscombe 2014) To maintain objectivity the interpretivist research will also be used concurrently with secondary source analysis. The secondary source analysis is to help

supplement for some of the insufficiency that the data given from the interpretive research. The secondary sources are mostly chosen from an array of book and journals written by scholars in the discipline of De facto states and Russian foreign policy. Some of the data is also selected from reputable objective news sources and few of the secondary sources also come from reports from a few government websites.

2.3 Theoretical framework

" *Building paradigm castle encourages insular thinking and puts too much emphasis on their difference* "

Samuel Barkins

3.2.1 Realist constructivism

The theoretical framework of this thesis is taken from a hybrid theory that Samuel Barkins introduces in his book Realist Constructivism: Rethinking International Relations Theory. Barkins argues that it is a fact possible to combine conflicting theories. The core argument in this book is that a paradigmatic way of thinking about different approaches is problematic and obscures both compatibilities among different approaches. This framework uses some elements of realist theory, but there is a healthy constructivist contingent to complement it.

The theory applies Constructivist principles to the overall Realist worldview by emphasizing the importance of ideas to enhance one's understanding of how and why states make particular decisions in the pursuit of their interests.(Barkins 2012:5) This adds more depth and context to realist theory which is often overly simplified. A realist constructivist will agree to that the state chooses policies which are most beneficial to its self and other states, but disagrees with the assumption there is an objective assessment that is applied equally by all international actors.

The theory focuses instead on how constructive elements such as ideology and culture influence the perceptions of self-interest and power which shape the actor's foreign policy decisions

Realist and Constructivists have maintained that their theories are incompatible with one another for years. The 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 narrow understandings of realism. Most self-proclaimed realists also claim their worldview of constructivists also falls within liberal worldviews.*

The theories of realism explain the relationship between agents and structures in a given system. In the case of the research, it is the patron state. The social constructivist theory maintains the idea that international relations are socially and historically constructed (Wendt 1999) While constructivism and realism are traditionally two rival theories in the school of International Relations. They both provide reasonable explanations of the situation, yet both leave some gaps that are left unexplained. 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 the can, in fact, is synthesized.

Constructivists who claim their methodology is incompatible with realism focus on the association between realism and both materialism and rationalism. Realists who claim their paradigm is incompatible with constructivism focus for the most part not on the methodology per se but on a perceived tendency for constructivists to be idealists or utopian. According to Barkins, realist constructivism would look at the way in which power structures affect patterns of normative change in international relations and, conversely, the way in which a particular set of norms affect power structure.

The majority of studies looked at regarding Russia, and its role tends to take a realist perspective. 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 with 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 to regain its influence within its Post-Soviet Sphere. Moscow views that the eastern expansion of NATO within its borders is a threat. The response makes it what Kenneth Waltz argues that the balance of threat theory is based not on survival but security (Waltz 1990) The annexation of Crimea was partly due to that the Russian Federation had limited control of the black sea, and NATO member states surround the vast majority of it. This expansion is one of the reasons why Moscow created these compatriot policies and gives patronage to separatist entities within its neighborhood. Political scientist John Mearsheimer maintains the position that Russian intervention in its near abroad that this was merely defensive. This argument is based on political realism.¹⁰ (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.*

Realist theory has a monopoly in the study of de Facto states, emphasizes the physical security of states. Realists often view the motivations of a state to be fixed across time and agent structures (Jaska 2017:37)Urban Jaska points out that there is little discussion of the identity of the de facto states and “ when identity is brought up “it was taken as something static and given as a constant rather than dynamic and reflexive. (IBID)

¹⁰ Toal 2016

The realist approach is too limiting and simplified to explain the de facto states relationship with the Russian Federation. Many aspects of the foreign policy the Russian Federation has regarding its near abroad are socially constructed. Many of these post separatist states use their history to rationalize their separatism from their parent states. The soft power implemented by the Russian Federation to influence its compatriots is an example of social constructivism. The obsession de facto states have with an identity also is a sufficient example. The Russian Federation bases a lot of its foreign policy on its nostalgia for its former history which is based in various aspects of social constructivism.

One biggest weapon the Russian Federation uses in maintaining its presence, and strategic goals in its near abroad are passports. (Natoli 2010:391) The Russian Federation has based the annexation of Crimea, 2008 Russian- Georgian, and presence in frozen conflicts on these compatriot policies. One of the problems with realist theories is that they ignore a lot of the complex problems and the critical 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" ¹¹(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 1999)

One of Wendt's most prominent critics of the positivist methodology is the lack of direct empirical access to the profound reality they study. Wendt challenges Waltz on his theory that is it is genuinely based on a particular ontology of general ontology of international politics which cannot be overturned by overlooked events and strained interpretation because it is "*it is difficult to separate what we "see" in international life from our conceptual lenses.*" Wendt argues that is useful for IR scholarship to contemplate more than one ontology. (Ibid)

Barkin's argues that constructivism can be limiting in the way it intersubjectivity undermines any potential conceit that international politics can be adequately described entirely concerning this one approach. (Barkin 2012 157). Realism has things it can offer constructivism. One thing being that is is a way to think about the relationship between empirical research and policy, including foreign policy. (Barkin 2012: 169)

Barkin's hybrid theory offers a balanced perspective in examining the relationship with the Russian Federation to the de facto states in its near abroad. Realist constructivism is constructivism in which a concern for power politics, understood as relational rather than structural, is central. This notion can be applied to the case studies.

Chapter 3: The Role of the Patron state

This chapter's purpose is to conceptualize patron states and how the patron state acts as a guarantor for the unrecognized state's survival. The research will thoroughly analyze the patron state's role in the state building of unrecognized states and examines its motives. The research

further analyzes other aspects of state patronage such as the legal, security and economic component of state patronage. The researcher draws from the concepts applies how the Russian Federation acts as a patron. The theory of Realist Constructivism is useful in understanding the motives of both parties involved in the patron-client state relationship. The patron state's strategic motives are based on realism. The methods it uses to sway de facto states have a constructivist tendency.

3.1 The existence of the de facto state and the patron state

In a contradictory way, the lack of recognition maintains its existence. Well-known Norwegian scholar Pal Kolsto maintains the position that "*even in the absence of effective state-building, most quasi-states have succeeded reasonably in their nation-building efforts*" (Kolsto 2006:728). Pal Kolsto lists five factors that explain the how these unrecognized states can 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 these states(Kolsto 2006:729-733)*

The most suitable point for the case studies is the fourth point. There is also an overlap the four other points have with to the fourth point. The patron state often directly or indirectly contributes to the rest of the points. The first reason being that the patron state uses the parent state or another group or to promote a common enemy. They do so by either directly or indirectly implementing an elite to do all it can do in its power to keep so-called citizens against the common enemy. In the fact states, the biggest enemy is the parent state. The patron state subsidizes which propagates the population. The Russian Federation heavily subsidizes the state-owned media for both Transnistria and Abkhazia. They do the same in the case in Transnistria. The most widely accepted assumption for Transnistria's split from Moldova is based on ideology an ethnically Russian elite rules much of the country. (Blakkisrud and Kolsto 2011:183) Abkhazia does not have 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 significant amount of the propaganda towards Transnistria thrives from Moldova's poverty. In fact, the average pensions and salaries are higher in Transnistria than they are in Moldova. (Comai 2016) Gazprom supplies gas to Transnistria and sends the debts to Moldova. The Russian Federation also offers many of these residents Russian nationality. The Russian Federation in the last decade simplified the nationality procedure for these residents. (Grigas 2016:85) Abkhazia is heavily passportised by Russia. 90%of Abkhaz have Russian passports, less than 10% of them are ethnic Russians (Artman 2013). The Republic of Abkhazia has less ethnic Russians living there than

most of the Baltic and central Asian states. This issue will be further elaborated on in the next chapter.

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 2012;3)

The first case is also applicable for the PMR, although a case can be made for all three examples. A patron state is more than likely to supporting a de facto state is so it can utilize 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 was defeated and humiliated in the early 2000s when NATO expanded into CEE Europe. The Russian Federation feels it cannot lose any more of s 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. (Van Herpen 2015:)

Maintaining influence is not only the motivation a patron state can have in supporting separatist causes. There are other benefits to the patron state. Crimea provides the black sea fleet for the Russian empire. Abkhazia gives the Russian Federation more access in the black sea fleet. Transnistria helps smuggle and transport Russian products to the European market. All of these separatist causes provide some strategic value to the Russian Federation.

Outsourcing territories

A significant amount of the security institutions in Abkhazia and Transnistria are outsourced to the Russian Federation. Nicu Popescu makes this argument when discussing the Russian support for separatist entities in Moldova and Georgia. He defines the term "*Outsourcing as a business jargon to describe a situation in which the organizational functions of an enterprise are transferred to a third party or country.*" Popescu 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 3) 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. Popescu states one can make a case that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are more heavily reliant on Russia for their independence than it is on does with Georgia.

3.1.3 The patron state as an obstacle

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 and that borrowed power is unstable power. (Kolsto and Blakkisrud 2011;).

Nina Caspersen states that the reliability of patron support in these areas for their short-term are not in danger. However, there are many critical uncertainties to determine whether or not Russian patronage to these territories will be the indefinite or even long term. One critical uncertainty is economical. The sanctions and economic crises placed on the Russian Federation following its annexation of Crimea resulted in the Russian Federation suffering an enormous economic crisis. The poverty within the Russian Federation increased from 3.1% into 19.2% in 2015 (World Bank). 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. Currently, The Russian people support Putin's foreign policy at an overwhelming majority despite the backlash against it among the international community (Pew Research 2016) There is an intense wave of nationalist movements, and the majority are staunchly in favor of protecting their compatriots abroad. However, this could also change if the Russian Federation undergoes an even worse economic crisis and massive inflation to where the everyday Russian struggles even more than from the last recession. The concern compatriots abroad will be less of a priority. Nationalist movements might 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 entirely Russian generated some problems among narrow nationalists. They mobilized around the slogan

" stop feeding the Caucasus in 2011". (Toal 2016; 283)The Russian Federation has its issues with ethnic separatism, especially in the southern Caucasus regions.

Another potential long-term uncertainty is the status of the Central Asian CIS republics. 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 independence 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.²⁰ (Mankoff 2014: 65)

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 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 feeling of Isolation can often strengthen the separatist cause even more drastically. Mikulas Fabry states *"The feeling of isolation often causes only fuels and a siege mentality. All these tend to lead to a rallying effect, reinforcing shared national identity among the population of unrecognized states"*(Martin Riegl and Bohumil Doboš 2017 :31) Nina Caspersen adds a 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 2013), 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. (IBID) This sounds like an ideal situation, but Caspersen points out that the problem with this is that a negotiating settlement becomes less of an urgent issue for the unrecognized state.

Although, maintaining the status quo is not going to give either one of these entities statehood. The 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 hold 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 in 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. She reported that many teachers and physicians remain uninformed about the latest modern medical treatments available. (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 only being recognized 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 claims 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 does not get to decide on the rules of secessionism. (Abrushev 2014:198)

3.1.4 The status quo

A frequent topic of discussion that is often brought up within unrecognized states is the topic of the status quo. 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 want to 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 sovereign states. The PMR would like to be subsequently added by the Russian Federation. However, its first goal is to become its 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 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.*" (Lynch 2004) If the conflict remains in a frozen conflict or stalemate, there can't be a war. For the Russian Federation, the status quo appears optimal for as long as these frozen conflicts exist, the Russian Federation has the position of bargaining power with these states. Rodkiewicz debates that Russia has no intention to recognize Transnistrian independence because Transnistria is how they can have leverage over the Republic of Moldova (Rodkiewicz, 2011:9) If the conflict resolves the Russian Federation would lose part of its bargaining power with Moldova. The Moldovan ambassador believes the status quo is the most desirable for the Russian Federation. He said that "*Control over this enclave gives Moscow a lasting political settlement*" (Interview Subject Moldova 2018)

Chapter 4: The Compatriot policies 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 compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory. Moreover, the epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself."

Vladimir Putin 2005

This chapter focuses both on the compatriot policies on Russian Federation and the mechanisms of soft power the Russian Federation uses to maintain influence among its compatriot abroad. This chapter will analyze and examine the strategic motives from these compatriot policies and mechanisms of soft power.

4.1 The evolution of the compatriot policies of the Russian Federation

In his annual speech to the Russians in 2005, Vladimir Putin stated that the most significant geopolitical disasters of the 20th century were the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Putin is also quoted saying *"one who does not regret the passing of the Soviet Union has no heart; one who wants to bring it back has no brains.* (Trenin 2012:64). The statement is 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. Toal states that the dissolution brought an identity crisis to (Toal 2016: 57) 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 (Trenin 2012). Russian geopolitical culture was shaped by 3 competing traditions according to Toal. *While only one was explicitly revisionist, advocating different borders from those left by the Soviet collapse, there was widespread consensus in Russian geopolitical culture that it was victimized territorially by the Soviet collapse* (Toal 2016 57-58)

4.1.1 A brief history of ethnic separatism in the Soviet Union

A substantial amount of the separatism in the 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 more significant benefits for their culture, language, and history than they were offered under the Tsars in the era of Imperial Russia. (George 2009:25) 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 Soviets 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 conquered mechanism when organizing territory. Stalin drew borders not respective to the ethnic groups living there. The Caucuses are an example of how this was implemented. Abkhazia and Georgia previously were their own separate but equal socialist republics. Abkhazia was subordinated into Georgia in 1936 (George 2009: 29-31). If the people in these Republics were divided, it was easier for the Soviet Union to conquer them.

The Moldovan ambassador brought up the use of "*Russification by marriage*" According to the ambassador " *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 bloodline.* (Formal Interview Moldova) Many 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 nationalist movements which made any talks of resolution difficult. This was especially apparent in 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 29).

Moldova had similar revival movements. There was a massive pull for the 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 (Roper 2005:505) 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 matters. 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 had precedence over the Russian alphabet (IBID). Newly elected Georgian president pushed for forced reorganization methods within Abkhazia. Most of the higher positions in the region went to ethnic Georgians (George 2009 35). 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 civil war 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.

4.1.2 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. (Kallas 2016: 5-6) Kallas 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 for 35% of all former Soviet citizens residing outside of their former successor state. (IBID). Besides, 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 fundamental 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 the right to exchange their previous Soviet nationality into Russian for a brief time. Many chose to remain as citizens of the CIS country where they resided. Many of them were born there and had had several generations in their family that was 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 remains a large number of Russians living in Latvia and Estonia on non-citizen or alien status (Kolsto 1993:203)

Following the dissolution of the USSR, The Russian Federation had to start taking into 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" (Mackannon 2014:1). 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 take one day in the future need to put these ideas intact to protect them, the interests, and the people living in the former USSR. (Ibid) 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. The question of compatriots contributed to the development of Russia's near Abroad policy (Ibid). When the Russian Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation" was first written 1993, it included an article 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 bill 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 to grant these rights. (Kallas 2016:7) .The law adopted in 1999 gave a very vague definition of what constitutes as a

compatriot. In a 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. (Ibid). 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 significant wave of compatriot policies which was the change in the Russian nationality laws in 2002.

On May 31st, 2002, Russia 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. These changes 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 2012:20) 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 Kyrgyz 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

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

The Russian Federation maintains the position that they are responsible for intervening when they feel Russian minorities are being 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 his or her citizens" (Natoli 2010 :394) The Russian and Georgian war was justified on the idea of protecting the national interests of Russian compatriots abroad in some narratives. The same argument repeats itself 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 arguably 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 2014:64) The Russian Federation states that their policies are only to defend the Russian minority and other minorities when they feel their rights and safety are in jeopardy. 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.

The Russian Federation is selective in choosing which compatriots are worth intervening on behalf of. There are other former Soviet Republics where the Ethnic Russian have been equally disenfranchised. 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 is also useful to mention 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 Kyrgyzstan. (Trenin 2015:133) Trenin also goes on to state that the color revolutions "*were a vivid demonstration of the precariousness of the U.S. connection.*" One can also see that the majority of Central Asian states are 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 that have been going on since the 1990s. 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 eastward expansion. It is commonly cited that NATO made a provision in 1993 that they would not "extend an inch east" (Klu 2009)

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 ¹²(the 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 percentage of Ethnic Russians in 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 a 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. Ethnic Russian children in Estonia and Latvia are taught the official languages in school at a young age. Most of the ethnic Russians without 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 have not been a real severe 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)

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 has incentives to resolve their separatist conflicts. This is one of the primary 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 on the surface. 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. These countries are not the only ones that the Russian Federation fears though. The EAP also extends to Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus. Though the goals of the EAP were intended to be parallel to the strategic partnership, the EU has with the Russian Federation .(Woods: 2015:44) This partnership increasingly perceived in Moscow as intended less to engage partner countries than to absorb them into EU structures, at Russian expense when relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation soured.

4.3 Use of soft power mechanisms

Soft power should be central to Russia's foreign policy. Russia possesses precious and virtually unused elements of this kind of power across the post-Soviet world; the Russian language is used from Riga to Almaty, and Russian culture, from Pushkin to pop music, is still in strong demand. - Demetri Trenin

While the Russian Federation has switched a more assertive and strategic foreign policy program in the last decade, it keeps a hold on its compatriots by using soft power type resources. Joseph Nye defines soft power as institutions, ideas, values, culture, and the perceived legitimacy of policies, a definite "domestic mode" (Nye 2005).

The Russian Federation implements mechanisms of soft power extensively not only in these separatist regions but its entire near abroad scope. Aside from its compatriot policies and use of passportisation, it holds another element softer power, its language, and culture. (Trenin 2012: 250) There have been numerous institutions founded by the Russian Federation to maintain its presence abroad, not only in its near-abroad but all over the world. Two of the leading institutions are the Russiky Mir foundation and Rossotrudnichestvo.

Russiky Mir and Rossotrudnichestvo

The Russky Mir foundation and Rossotrudnicesvo are all over the CIS. Their crucial aim to promote education and culture, the Russian language and the Russian World, as well as to support compatriots in the EaP countries.

A central narrative addresses the citizens of neighboring countries that they revolve around a concept called "Russiky Mir" which translates to "the Russian World." Russky Mir is to include all that associate with Russian language and Culture. Russky 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 2012 This narrative stems from Alexander Dugin's concept of "Eurasianism." 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.(EU STAT 2017:14 Frear and Mazepus 2017; Liik 2017)

Rossotrudnichestvo translates to "Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of the Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation. It has been running since 2008. It operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. The activity of Rossotrudnichestvo and its foreign missions aims at the implementation of the state policy of international humanitarian cooperation, promotion abroad of an objective image of contemporary Russia. Van Harpen explains that Rostrudnichestvo was not so much cultural as geopolitical. It was set up "to centralize activities undertaken intending to maintain Russian influence in the CIS are and that its primary focus was the former Soviet space and the Russian-speaking minorities living there. (Van Harpen 2016:36) In 2013 President Putin signed an order to increase the agency's budget from 2 billion rubles (approximately \$ 37 million) to 9.5 billion rubles (approximately \$ 174 million) by 2020,

(Grigas 2016 38). This is one of the most expensive methods of supporting compatriots abroad.

Whataboutism and the widely used Kosovo precedent

“Whataboutism” was a term that originated from the Soviet period to describe Soviet comments in pointing out the 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 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)

The one of the most common issues brought up in this strategy is the Kosovo Precedent. Coincidentally, it is also 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 separatism (UNPO 2017). The Kosovo precedent is a comparable to "Godwin's law" ¹³ in the study of ethnic separatism. Every argument

about separatism of any kind will result in 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 cause. Each of them has established their right to remedial separatism.

The Russian Federation was one of the member states not formally to recognize Kosovo being a staunch 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.*" (Asmus 2010:120) 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 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 secessionism. "The declaration launched on March 11th, 2014 invoked the Kosovo precedent. The declaration states "*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 are exhaustively debated. Lina Laurinavičiūtė and Laurynas Biekša offer a straightforward explanation for why this does not apply to the de facto states within the Post-soviet sphere. They state that "The cases of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transdnistria, and Crimea reveal that the right to remedial secession is 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 assisted by third states, which violates international law, and while the mediation of the international community or third states is often necessary for the negotiation process, the participation of states "violators" might be regarded as a decisive obstacle preventing bona fide negotiations" (Laurinavičiūtė Bieska 2015:74). Legally, the patron state cannot aid the separatist group in a country. This principle 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 constant use of the precedent for justification.

4.5 The limitations of these compatriot policies and soft power mechanisms

Gerald Toal raises a pivotal 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 significant factor is an economic drain that these de facto states have on the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation invests a fair amount of money in these frozen conflicts. The Russian Federation has the burden of paying for the pensions to many of these so-called citizens. The Russian Federation suffered economically because of the sanctions put in place by the West over the annexation of Crimea. These frozen conflicts at the moment are a lower priority.

Another issue is whether or not the Russian Federation gets much in return for its support to these de facto states. The case studies will reflect on the geopolitical value these de facto states have for the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation has a more profound interest in Ukraine than it does in Moldova or Georgia. The Russian Federation's reputation and relationship with Ukraine has been severely tarnished. *'By seeking to maintain its suzerain role in Ukraine when a less dominant and intrusive status was overdue, Russia has lost most of its influence in Kyiv and converted a friendly neighbor into an adversary.'*(Wood 2016 44-45) These aggressive policies are costly for the economic status of the Russian Federation and also costly for its reputation. Would the Russian Federation be willing to continue this risk for the Republic of Moldova and Georgia?

Chapter 5: Case study 1: The Republic of Abkhazia¹⁴



¹⁴ Map of the separatist territories in the Republic of Georgia: credit Geohistory today

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. 1. (UNPO 2015;2)

Following the Russian revolution, Georgia became its 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 the Red Army invaded Georgia 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 slightly 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 same “divide and conquer” method that Russia still uses today to maintain a presence in its near abroad. Abkhazia 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 Soviet Union. The Georgians placed themselves at a higher culture which put the other minorities at a disadvantage 4(Toft 2004:89)

The relations between Georgia and Abkhazia were further strained towards 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 a letter to Moscow protesting

the status of Abkhazia, but Moscow was too entangled in their affairs (Ibid) The collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in a bloody war from 1992-994 between the new nationalist government of Aviad 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 2016 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 somewhat stagnant but not entirely frozen. The conflict once again heats 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 : 48) Georgia started making efforts to join NATO in 2005 by signing the Partnership for Peace. Provisions of the signing of this treaty were 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 Plan⁶. (Asmus 2010 78). The Bucharest summit was a disaster brought a heated discussion among the allies. The allies were hoping they could tiptoe around the discussion without upsetting Moscow too much. Putin expressed his disappointment at the next NATO-Russia council. The Russian Federation was already strengthening ties with the separatist territories, but claimed to have no intention of recognizing Abkhazia and South Osetia. (Ibid)

Putin issued a decree right after the Bucharest summit that instructed Russian government authorities to cooperate with the de facto authorities in Abkhazia .(Asmus 2010: 89) Russia engaged in 6 days a war with Georgia from August 8th- 12th which resulted in the Russia recognition of Abkhazia and South Osetia.

5.1.2 Abkhazia Today

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 profile). The Russian Federation still heavily supports the Russian Federation. However, the support 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 Abkhazia is only recognized by four other UN member states: Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru and recently Syria. They also have recognition from the other de facto states in the post-soviet sphere. They hosted and won 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. Sergey Lavrov attended the opening. (Tamkin 2017) Because they are unrecognized by most of the world, the majority of residents in Abkhazia hold Russian Nationality. Abkhazia 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 instead of the Russian Federation. He believes that there is an information war is being fought against Abkhazia. He stated 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 has a relatively high position of soft power in the Republic of Abkhazia . 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. (Freedom house 2017 Profile Abkhazia) Russian media has the upper hand in the Republic of Abkhazia. According to a human rights report for Abkhazia, local journalists have very difficult for them to compete with well-funded and well-produced Russian newspapers due to that how small and underfunded the local outlets are. ‘The salary difference between the Russian agency and a local newspaper are (Hammarsburg and Gromoso 2017;29) Some journalists complain 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-Inform. (IBID)

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 primary language for receiving foreign news. The older generation of Abkhaz has 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 can study in.

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

5.2.1 The General Consensus

The Abkhaz view 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 “ *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 Abkhazia)

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 by Gerard Toal and John O’Loughlin in 2009 and 2010 within Abkhazia a couple years earlier, 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 3rd 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 aide 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.

Khajimba was the candidate that the Russian federation backed in the previous Abkhaz elections.

5.2.2 Key developments since the annexation of Crimea

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 Abkhazia. (UNPO 2015;2)

The document also called for a shift of the Abkhazia and Russian border to the Injuri river which divides Abkhazia from Georgia. It permitted Moscow to secure joint control of Abkhaz and Georgian border of the movement of people, cargo, and transport in Abkhaz customs. (Harding 2014) Before this, there was no physically defined natural border with Abkhazia and Georgia, one of the requirements for statehood.

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 that there were too many components regarding “integration” which is something they did not want and against everything they fought for. 9(*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 of changing the term "Integration" to "Strategic partnership." Waal speculates that the Armenian and Russian minorities were less opposed. Another draft was made in 2015 that removed some of the unpopular provisions (Freedom house profile Abkhazia 2017) 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 agreement angered Tbilisi and added more tensions to the ongoing problems with Abkhazia. The US state department maintained that this agreement was not valid under international law. (RFE 2016) Georgia and the majority of the international community saw this also as another step towards annexation.

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 with 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 of Russian investors. Russian investors would help the Republic of Abkhazia economically. This further isolates the Republic of Abkhazia from its primary 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.

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 concern of losing tourism to the newly annexed territory. Many Russians in 2015 decided to go to Crimea for the summer as their patriotic duty (Fischer 2016;43). Abkhazia has one million Russian tourists visit Abkhazia every year. The number 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. (Balmforth 2016) Besides, 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 lovely cheap holiday for the less wealthy Russians. (European Council of Foreign Relations 2016)

Abkhazia has a rich history in tourism. Abkhazia was a 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 suffers from the lack of private investors. Most of the investments and growth come from Kremlin subsidies. (Alikin 2017) Alikin states in his report that unfair treatment of the authorities also causes investors to alienated. The foreign sanctions have not been much help to Crimea either. Ordinary Crimeans complain that after being incorporated into Russia, they saw prices double and incomes dry up as vacationers, primarily 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 correlating 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 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 somewhat complicated and time-consuming. (Abkhaz foreign ministry)

The Republic of Georgia has seen a significant 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 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 3rd spot in tourism to Georgia. (Georgian journal 2018) While Abkhazia tourism industry has benefited since the annexation of Crimea in the short run, 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.

Abkhaz Russia Joint Military force

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" (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 agreement angered Tbilisi and added more tensions to the ongoing problems with Abkhazia. The US state department maintained that this agreement was not valid under international law. Georgia and the majority of the international community saw this also as another step towards annexation.(Ibid)

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 denounces this as *a trap by Tbilisi*. The Russians retaliated immediately by making promises to negotiate with the European Union to not block passports for Abkhaz citizens (Lomsasze 2017).There hasn't been much development so far. There are also no reports that can be found on the number of Abkhaz citizens that have made an effort to obtain a Georgian passport even for the sole purpose of the fact it makes things more convenient for them and helps ease the problems many Abkhaz have with isolation. 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”. (Georgia Civil 2017) The ministry stated that people in the territories could 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 member states of the EU were heavily criticized for refusing to grant visas for Abkhaz and South Osetians who apply for visas in the Russian Federation. 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 for his visa. (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 the question “In 2017 the Republic of Georgia was granted 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 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 would also act for so-called residents of the occupied territories. 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 on them. He said he would try to raise the matter in Brussels. (Lomzade 2017) Both the Abkhaz and Russian position on this subject is that if the Republic of Georgia wants to help the Abkhaz really, they should revoke the 2008 law of Georgia on occupied territories (Ibid).

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 significant drop in subsidies but had a significant increase again in 2016. . 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) 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 2015:299) 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 The geopolitical value of Abkhazia for the Russian Federation

One Geopolitical asset that Abkhazia offers to the Russian Federation is a physical border. The Abkhaz-Russian treaty allows for a joint military force gives the Russian Federation a

presence on what is considered Georgian legal territory by international law. Since formally recognizing Abkhazia in 2008, Russia started to construct some military facilities in both regions, including a new naval base in Abkhazia, which has been 4000 troops. (Gerritts and Badar2015;302)

Since nearly all of the residents of Abkhazia hold Russian nationality, Moscow can use the compatriot justification as an intervention tactic whenever it decides. (IBID) However, they only identify as Russians in the legal sense and out of necessity. The Abkhaz have their own ethnic identity which is unique from the Russian Federation. While the Abkhaz see the Russian Federation as a helpful benefactor and a vital alliance to have, they lack the shared ethnic kinship with Russians that other separatist regions in the former CIS like the PMR does. The Abkhaz foreign ministry also supported this statement by 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)

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) However, the Russian Federation can pull support anytime it likes and will only suffer minimum consequences. The Russian Federation has Abkhazia essentially wrapped around its finger when it comes to creating a single dependency. Andre Gerritts 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” (Gerrits and Bader 2015:310) The position towards Georgia is less of a priority than it was a few years ago for both the West and the Russian Federation.

5.4 Conclusion for case 1

There have been some key developments since the annexation of Crimea. They have not been not very dramatic aside from the Abkhaz- Russian treaty and establishment of joint forces. Despite the criticism towards this, there was not a real annexation. There doesn't seem to be an annexation of Abkhazia in the future. 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 afterward (Fischer 2016:54-55).

The Republic of Abkhazia strengthened its Abkhaz nationalist policies both internally and externally. They did make an alliance treaty, but this was out of security. However, their firm stance on not allowing Russians to purchase property is a crucial 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 to the Russian-Abkhaz treaty are also an indicator of this.

There could be some negative consequences in the future. One of the most significant 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. Abkhazia's adopted nationalist policies might also make things worse for itself in the future. Abkhazia relies on the Russian Federation for all kinds of support. They enjoy the security guarantee. They want the subsidies and Russian tourist money, but won't even allow Russian citizens to purchase property. Abkhazia runs the risk in alienating the Russian Federation and therefore losing its 'insurance policy'. This is a dangerous position to have when the Russian Federation has more important priorities such as the situation in Crimea. To have only one country as a strategic ally is a poor strategy for the Republic of Abkhazia. The Russian Federation can easily withdraw its support.

A lot of the problems that Abkhazia faces with their one-sided dependency towards the Russian Federation and its isolation is caused by themselves. The Abkhaz government rejects every opportunity to compromise with their parent state Georgia. 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 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 has not always been receptive to their wishes, they did make an effort in 2017 by 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 a complete deadlock for many more generations. The issue with international isolation will also cripple their quest in obtaining International recognition. The

blame is assigned to the parent state of Georgia and the west. A compromise must be agreed on if they want to achieve the international recognition that goes beyond half a dozen countries. It is essential for them in their state-building process. This will not happen without any compromise with Tbilisi.

Chapter 6

Case study 2-Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria)



6.1 Basic history and Geopolitics

The conflict between Moldova and Transnistria ignited into a war in March of 1992. The fighting continued until July 21st, 1992 when a ceasefire was reached. (Buescher 2015;28) The death toll was estimated to be around several hundred deaths. This war was seen as very tame on the international scale compared to other ongoing separatist wars happening in the Caucasus 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 governance for the

¹⁵ **Map of the PMR/Transnistria: Credit *Foreign policy***

most part. It has remained as a defect state since 1992, while recognized internationally as part of Moldova (Kramer 2016).

The root of Transnistrian separatism is debated of whether or not it was on account of 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 the leadership of Transnistria, the entity was democratically founded, by a citizen referendum to protect minority rights. Moreover, the future will become democratic too." (Caspersen 2008). Most scholars say the conflict was political and ideological. The secessionist movement motive was to restore communism in a renewed Soviet Union.

The PMR asserts itself as a multinational Republic in its constitution. Article 43 of 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 and insist that the conflict was also ethnic. The main argument given is that the conflict was mainly 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 a nationalistic backlash in both Russia and Romania to fade. (Roper 2005) 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. Kolsto and Malign argue 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. (Malign and Kolsto (1998) 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. Transnistria has not given the same freedoms to ethnic Moldovans living in the PMR that they demand from the Republic of Moldova. (Ibid)

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 2005;510). They used vague reasoning stating that it was due to the failure of these language institutions to obtain licenses and accreditation. Also, 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 an 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 (Ibid) There has been little progress and resolution since then regarding these closures. There is also widespread concern that ethnic Moldovans undergo widespread discrimination by law enforcement (Freedom house 2016). The ruling elite in the PMR is ethnically Russian. (Ibid)

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. (Beuscher 2015:29) About 200,000 of the residents of the PMR hold Russian citizenship and multiple citizenship is quite common. 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 ambassador of the Republic of Moldova believes the best indicator of the real number can be acquired by examining the *"flow of goods."* (Moldova interview 2018) There have been attempted talks called the 5+2 talks supervised by the OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine but they have not been effective. 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. (Beuscher 2016:30) 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)

Russian soft power is a strong force the PMR. Unlike the Abkhaz, most of the residence in Transnistria believe they share a common culture and identity with the Russian Federation. 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) An autocratic elite runs Transnistria. The company Sherrif is a 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 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. According to the Moldovan ambassador, media outlets in the PMR run fake headlines such as "*Moldova seeks to reunite with Romania*" to propagate them and discredit the Moldovan or any other press (Interview Moldova). There was even a bill recently up for discussion that seeks to criminalize those caught insulting the Russian keeping forces.

The PMR has problem with trafficking of all kinds and smuggling between the Moldovan and Ukrainian border(Popescu 2008) 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)

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 the PMR have at least one or two other passports that enable them to leave when they want. Moldovan and Ukrainian citizens are allowed them to visa-free access to the European Union. Many of them have a passport that enables them to leave and many of them do so. The PMR has one of the highest brain drains within Europe. The young and the educated have little desire to stay. Another testament is 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 labor 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 his visa 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 do not give us a chance.* (Informal interview subject 3) 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 most impoverished country in Europe (Rummer 2017:3). Popescu explained the government of the PMR uses this as a way to keep the population uninterested in the Republic of Moldova (Pospecu 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 a 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 2017:6).While the Republic of Moldova remains as weak 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 in with PMR as whatever degree or certification a student obtains is not recognized by the rest of the world.

Transnistria has sent several requests to join the Russian Federation. One of the critical 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 the vast majority of Transnistrians prefer unification with Russia. (Toal O' Loughlin 2012)

The Russian Federation did not give much response to 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 Overall consensus of the PMR

The majority of Transnistrians viewed Russia's annexation of Crimea as a positive thing. The Transnistrians were hopeful that this would unfreeze the status quo and allow them to join the Russian Federation. Transnistrian foreign minister welcomes the annexation of Crimea and pointed parallels with the Transnistrian referendum and the Crimean referendum (Buescher 2016 22). 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 officially recognizes the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic to our Russian counterparts. At the same time, it is evident that this question should be considered taking into account the current geopolitical situation, which today is objectively somewhat 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 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 1) Another subjected 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 Transnistria were just a free area with some special*

status."(Informal interview 3) This notion is still in the minority. There are many youth movements within the PMR and schools are useful in reinforcing historical narratives and revisionism the schools (Cojocaru 2006:23)

6.2.2 Key Developments

Identical legislation to Moscow

One development was the synchronization of legislation. The one of the interview subjects said if there is a law passed in the Russian Federation, the PMR must also adopt 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 per 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 profile Transnistria 2017)

Increased resentment from Ukraine towards the PMR

The annexation of Crimea negatively affected the status that Transnistria has regarding Ukraine. Ukraine formally had a neutral stance regarding Transnistria in the past. Ukrainian authorities did not officially recognize its statehood and expressed support for the territorial integrity to Moldova but abstained from Moldovan initiatives to control the region.(Calus 2014;71) Since the fighting in Eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, the stance became more negative.. There was growing fear that the PMR would try to escalate the conflict. This fear was quite rational as it didn't take much time for it to be realistic. There were reports in March 2014 revealing that Russian Special Forces entered Transnistria in civilian outfits. According to Callus *"It also became clear that the region has become one of the sources of weapons and ammunition for separatists fighting in Donbas – well-known Moldovan arms dealer, Ion Druță, participated in transactions with Ukrainian separatists."* (Calus 2014;74). The longtime standing state security member Vladimir Antufeyec had a prominent role in assisting "The Donetsk People's Republic" in building structures and is currently the vice prime minister of this separatist region. There was also a plot revealed to destabilize Odessa in 2015 (Beuscher 2016 35). . Moldova's Security and Intelligence Service, SIS, also confirmed to BIRN that they confirmed 62 persons taking part in mercenary activities in Ukraine since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine between Ukrainian and pro-Russian separatist forces. The majority of them are from Transnistria. (Necestu 2018)

Kiev set several countermeasures against Transnistria over a two year period. Some of the key ones consist of: Entry Ban on members of PMR leadership, Entry ban on Transnistrian men with Russian citizenship, Ban on Russian military transport in through Ukrainian territory and stepping up border control. (Beuscher 2016:37) 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 banded together in the last year to establish joint border control of the PMR. In July 2017, Poroshenko and Filip opened the common crossing point ' Kuchurhan- Pervomasi on their borders in Odessa Oblast. Ukrainian and Moldovan border guards have started to maintain the common 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 will slow the flow of Russian goods into the European market. Gerard Toal maintains the notion that Transnistria was initially supposed to give that Russia a degree of leverage over the geopolitical orientation of Ukraine. However the increased tensions in the last years has made this leverage much weaker. 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).

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 primary 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 staff 2017).

Dodon ran his campaign on goals and promises for a reassessment of Moldova's ties with the West, a strengthening of Moldova's ties to Russia, and pledging to go forward with improving Chisinau-Tiraspol relations (Strafor 2016). Dodon 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 (Morgan 2016) 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)

Dodon has been quoted to support the Russian annexation of Crimea and stating that it was always Russian during his campaign. Dodon's support was dismissed as "high treason" by rival candidate Maia Sandu (Ursu 2016) The official Facebook page for Igor Dodon is also written in Russian and Moldovan. Dodon's decisions are also heavily opposed by other leaders in Moldova. The Moldovan Prime minister Pavel Filip has highly criticized him for signing the agreement with the Eurasian Union and trying to undermine the European Association Agreement, he also stated that it is completely out of legal framework. (Morgan 2017) Moldova's observer status means they are only allowed to be included within in the organisation's activities but do not have a right to vote or participate in decision-making processes.

Transnistria also had elections shortly after the Moldovan elections in 2016. Transnistria elected Vladim Krasnoselski on December 12th, 2016. (Vlas 2016). Moscow was not engaged or active in its support for either candidate. Both politicians were equally received by Russia's Vice-Prime Minister and a special representative of the President for Transnistria, Dmitry Rogozin. (Calus 2016) The Russian Federation already has the guaranteed support of this region

regardless of which candidate wins a Transnistrian elections. It doesn't particularly matter who wins in these elections for the Russian Federation. The Moldovan election was more important much more a key issue for the Russian Federation along with some other elections that year.

But the coinciding election in Moldova could see a potential possible change in the future Dondon congratulated Krasnoelski and pledged to do what he could to mend the relationship. Although, there has been no improvement and minimal accomplishment in easing the tension. 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. Moreover, 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 aligned with the rest of the Moldovan government due to his support for support for a decision to establish common 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 to separate the gas debt between Moldova and the PMR. The request which was immediately

denied. 88% of Moldova's gas debt is from Transnistria. (Vlas 2017) The Moldovan ambassador says the Republic of Moldova does not recognize this debt. The gas continues to go to the PMR while the unpaid bill goes 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 has been 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 reasonable 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 Dondon is incapable and inconsistent. The Dondon presidency and political gridlock faced by the Republic of Moldova has already been difficult without even taking the frozen conflict into account. The Republic of Moldova has passed an anti-propaganda law at the end of 2017. The bill aimed 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.

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.

Military support to the PMR has increased since the annexation of Crimea. The factory of Kolbasna remains to be an essential factor. The Moldovan ambassador states that there are over 500,000 tons of ammunition stored there. (Moldova Interview Subject) In 2017, there was an increase in 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 have 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) On account of nearly all of its trading partners being negatively recession and decrease in aid from Russia, GDP declined by about 20 percent in 2015 (Buescher 2016 40)

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 significant 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 many other Russians just outside of Moscow that also has their gas off often. People here are so naive"* (Informal Interview subject number 2 2017)

One aspect of Russian economic support that is dramatically different from 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 interviewer's 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) *This place has much more western tourists than Russian tourists. They come here because it is some Soviet theme amusement park in their eyes.*

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.

6.3 The geopolitical value of the PMR for the Russian Federation

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 2016:125). As long as the frozen conflict remains, Moldova will continue to face difficulties.

Russian Federation would risk too many factors if it were to go further in the process of annexing Transnistria. The Russian Federation has already dealt with a significant amount of criticism for its actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine and suffered tremendously from the sanctions. If the PMR was annexed, it would further strain relations with Ukraine and Moldova, and further drive their integration into western institutions at the very least.. It is already enough that the two are signatories of the European Association agreements. It would also anger the international community, and they could risk further sanctions and punishments.

The geographical position of the PMR also further complicates the logistics of 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 (Grigas 2016;200) points out that it is not far from the Ukrainian territories deemed as "Novorossiya." The Minsk agreements have since put a block on the majority of the separatist behavior in Ukraine. The Minsk agreements have been a failure. The separatism has been contained to the eastern part of Ukraine. The conflict within eastern Ukraine is still hundreds of kilometers away from the breakaway region.

The PMR like the Republic of Abkhazia 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 2016: 12). 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 de facto state to become part of the Russian Federation. The appeal has yet to be granted. (Girgas 2016:13 2) 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 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.*" Primarily for the Russian Federation, this is the case if Chisinau decides to abandon prospects for NATO membership and gives the Transnistria region some autonomous 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 massive protests. (Necutu 2017) Moldova was also given observer status in the EEU.

The Republic of Moldova and the PMR are also not as historically significant as Crimea and Ukraine. This is evident when dissecting Putin's justifications for the Crimea annexation in his

speech to the Russian Federal Assembly on March 18, 2014 (Rogstad 2016; 13). 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) Transnistria does not even come close.

While 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 2018) 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)

6.4 Conclusion for case study 2

The relationship that has been affected with the Russian Federation has been mostly 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 a minimal 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 initially 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 significant 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. On July 18th, 2017, separatists in Eastern Ukraine announced the "New state of Malorossiia" or "Little Russia." The overall goal is to 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 territorial sovereignty of Ukraine would not be violated.* (IBID) There are many other flaws.

Russian patronage does give the PMR a false sense of security and optimism. The deputy to the foreign minister of the PMR 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. Rogstad argues that the Russian Federation does not see the PMR or Moldova in the same way as does with Ukraine or Belarus. *Russian leaders regularly consider Ukraine and Ukrainians as brothers of Russia, part of the same family with the same religious and cultural heritage The pride placed on Moldova is not the same.* (Rogstad 9 2016,).

\ 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 merely 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 in 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 London'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 continuously in a geopolitical tug of war between Russia and Europe. De Waal's suggestion for Abkhazia 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 Gagauzia. The Moldovan ambassador also agreed that there could be negotiations to allow Transnistria a level of autonomy that Gagauzia has.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Hypothesis conclusions

The first central hypothesis of the research: *The annexation of Crimea has not significantly affected the Russian Federation's relationship with these case studies in the short-term situation.* is true for the case with the PMR. The PMR underwent more negative setbacks as a result of the annexation, but the overall relationship with the Russian Federation remains strong. The relationship has slightly changed with the Republic of Abkhazia but only slightly. The Abkhaz reasserted some nationalist rhetoric (Fisher 2016), but that was mostly the end of it. A couple of backlashes are not going to send the Russian Federation out.

The second central hypothesis of *Russia's role in supporting the de facto creates a one-sided dependency on them which in turn becomes an obstacle in their state building* is particularly true for the Republic of Abkhazia which legitimately wants to become a recognized state state. The Republic of Abkhazia is reliant to the Russian Federation on nearly every aspect but has no desire to be part of them and wishes for de jure sovereignty. The PMR would prefer to be absorbed into the Russian Federation than be its state as per the 2006 referendums and the deputy to the foreign ministry of the PMR.

The first sub-hypothesis “*The Russian Federation would prefer that these de facto states maintain the status quo because it benefits from it*” is right for the case of Abkhazia. The Russian Federation would prefer to keep Abkhazia the way it is. However for the case of the PMR this is

false. The Russian Federation does not benefit from the status quo of the PMR. If anything it loses from it. The annexation of Crimea made the status quo of the PMR less desirable for the Russian Federation. The joint border control and restrictions placed on the Russian Federation by Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova has made things more complicated.

The sub-hypothesis *The compatriot policies set by Moscow and Russian soft power mechanisms are effective in ensuring that the de facto states in keeping the status quo is valid* for both cases. However, a fundamental difference is that soft power mechanisms are a stronger force in the case of the PMR than Abkhazia. The Slavic identity plays a more prominent role in the PMR. A handful of Russian elite hold a monopoly on the media that penetrates it. The “novyruссия” narrative is a potent force in the Transnistrian psyche. The entire country’s existence is rooted in nostalgia for the Soviet Union. While the Russian media dominates the media landscape of the Republic of Abkhazia, the Abkhaz still have their own unique identity that is different. Their relationship with the Russian Federation is more pragmatic. The compatriot policies are more useful though in the Republic of Abkhazia than the PMR. Abkhazia would not exist without them. These compatriot policies justified the Russian war with the Republic of Georgia and subsequent recognition. Over 90 percent of residents in Abkhazia hold Russian nationality while only roughly half in the PMR do.

7.2 Critical outlook

The case studies show that the concerns of the Russian Federation annexing these territories are widely inflated. The annexation of Crimea and separatist wars in Eastern Ukraine show little promise to these de facto states for their respective wishes. The PMR is highly unlikely to be annexed by the Russian Federation. The Republic of Abkhazia is not going to achieve statehood with its reliance on Moscow. The most likely scenario in the long-term future is that that they will one day be forced to reckon with their parent states to achieve some level of autonomy. This will not happen until the Russian Federation cuts its support to these de facto states. This is not a highly unlikely scenario. The matter of when and how is uncertain and not the objective of the research, but it is an issue to contemplate in further research. The case studies did show that these de facto states are costly and are more or less a burden for the Russian Federation. The ongoing situation in Ukraine has made these conflicts less of a priority for Moscow. Moscow did try to establish some more partnerships and so-called acts of goodwill to maintain support from these regions following the annexation of Crimea, but even Moscow is more occupied by more pressing issues than a couple of breakaway states. The most recommended option for these states is to start looking toward their parent state in achieving some compromise, but this will not happen without a drastic change.

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