

**TRANSNISTRIA IN THE GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE WIDER BLACK SEA  
AREA – HISTORIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH**

The basin of the Black Sea becomes not only a physical-geographical entity but also a political-geographical one. The Black Sea is predestined to be the epicenter of some of the geopolitical seism, the place of confrontation of certain centers of power and a perpetual „zone of contact” of their spheres of influence.

The last decade of the XX century and the beginning of the XXI century brings the end of some „accumulative periods”. The Black Sea returns to the spotlight of the global geopolitical games, becoming a place where the interests of great players meet. The situation of this region can never be static.

The history convinces us that, due to its geographical structure, the basin of the Black Sea is a zone predisposed to instability, movement and conflict.

*The factor of the Republic of Moldova in the Pontic space* – the problem of the Transnistrian separatism represents a special segment of the present period, appeared after the collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence on the world political map of a new sovereign state: Republic of Moldova. In comparison with other regions of the ex-soviet space, the Transnistrian separatism erupted, in spring 1992, into real war, causing a delay of the democratic process and the society reformation of the Republic of Moldova.

Therefore, the main goal of this paper is the analysis of the conflicts’ specifics in the post-soviet space: the frozen conflict on the Nistru River in the Republic of Moldova. Special attention will be paid to the formation process of the national identity, to the role of the state and to some defining external factors. Beginning with the premise of a sufficient legal framework for ethnic co-existence, we will pay attention to the mechanism of intensifying tension caused by political interests.

In my paper I will speak about the geopolitical factor of the Transnistrian detachment in the historiography of the Republic of Moldova and the pro-separatist historiography from Transnistria and Russian Federation.

*The historiography of the Republic of Moldova* – the first symptoms of the Transnistrian strife manifested openly, as mentioned by some Moldovan authors<sup>1</sup>, beginning with the formation, in summer 1989 years, of a political movement to claim the “Moldovan” language and its changeover to Latin characters. From this period on, marked with first big victories of the national-democrats from Chisinau, the scission of the republic along the Nistru River became

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<sup>1</sup>Igor Cașu, „*Politica națională*” in *Moldova Sovietică (1944-1989)*, Chisinau, 2000; Gheorghe E. Cojocaru, *1989 la Est de Prut*, Chișinău, Prut Internațional, 2001; Țăranu, A., *Cauzele conflictului armat de la Nistru*, in *Caiete de istorie*, Chisinau, 2002, nr. 2, p. 1;

absolutely evident, and from 1990 on, the Transnistrian strife had lost the character of an intercultural conflict to the favor of a geopolitical one, deepened after the Republic of Moldova gained independence, as it is generally agreed by researchers indifferent of ideology or political regime.

The Transnistrian problem constitutes, today, one of the biggest difficulties of the Republic of Moldova, the region representing a focal point internally, and a potential risk externally, jeopardizing the security of the South-East Europe.

According to Nicolae Enciu, researcher at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, after USSR disintegration Russia wouldn't agree to become equal to the other ex-union's republics, thus, pretending to assume the role of the unique heir of ex-Soviet Union (concerning both its patrimony and history), declaring, respectively, specific geostrategic interests in ex-soviet entities<sup>2</sup>.

Nicolae Enciu also affirms that the geopolitical situation of Russia to its South-West will remain advantageous as long as the Republic of Moldova stays in its sphere of influence. And the key for solving this problem would be Transnistria and the situation of Russo-language population from the Republic of Moldova<sup>3</sup>.

In regard to the causes of Transnistrian secessionism, the historian N. Enciu presents „three essential factors” which contributed to its launching: a) “the Kremlin's expansionist politics”, which pursued the goal of keeping ex-soviet loyalty “oasis” around Russia; b) “the political reaction with reverse sense of the Russo-language population, congregated on the ruins of internationalist and pan-soviet ideology”; c) “the echoes of the national rebirth movement of the majority of the population from Moldova ”, in 1989-1991 years<sup>4</sup>.

An interesting idea on Russian geopolitical strategy offers the researcher Elena Siupur, which affirms that as soon as the Republic of Moldova became official, it unleashed a chain reaction of appearance of other artificial and ideological aberrant *states* (a. s.), who suffocate one another as it was meant in the moment of their conceiving<sup>5</sup>. These new states created on the example of Russian doll – *matrioshka* – would affect only those territories which showed the desire to leave the imperial sphere<sup>6</sup>.

In the same context, A. Țurcanu considers that the Transnistrian strife “started as a diversion”, after an evident volition of ex-Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic to escape

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<sup>2</sup>Nicolae Enciu, *Istoria românilor. Epoca contemporană*, Chisinau, Civitas, 2001, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup>Nicolae Enciu, *Proiectele conducerii Republicii Moldova de soluționare a problemei transnistrene*, in *Destin românesc. Revista de istorie și cultură*, Chisinau, 2003, nr. 1, pp. 152 - 158.

<sup>4</sup>Nicolae Enciu, *Istoria românilor...*, p. 167.

<sup>5</sup>Elena Siupur, *Basarabia – Republica Moldova - ipostaze ale mutilării*, in *Destin românesc. Revista de istorie și cultură*, Chisinau, 1994, nr. 2, pp. 52-68.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibidem*, pp. 60-67.

Moscow's „vassalage” determined the acrimonious reaction of the imperial center. Consequently, according to the old adage style *divide et impera*, in the Republic of Moldova were created two centers of power - Tiraspol and Comrat, therefore, the promise of the union speaker Lukianov concerning the creation of another two republics on the territory of Soviet Moldova was kept<sup>7</sup>.

Even if to admit that, initially, a strategic plan with long-term geopolitical objectives didn't exist, completes A. Țurcanu, the attempt of the totalitarian Center to loosen both the developing cohesion force of the national liberation movements wave and their effect on the Soviet Union disintegration was obvious. Desiring to preserve, at any cost, total and everlasting control on the periphery union republics, Kremlin resorted to the creation and resuscitation of some local conflicts, applying the same „serial” scenario in different corners of the former Soviet Empire<sup>8</sup>.

As the president of the Institute for Public Policy underlines, the region of Transnistria is being used as an instrument of politic manipulation of Republic of Moldova by the Russian Federation<sup>9</sup>.

In this context, it is important to mention, according to the studies carried out by Oazu Nantoi, that the problem of Transnistrian separatism has already existed since the emergence of the Republic of Moldova on the world political map in August 27<sup>th</sup> 1991<sup>10</sup>, and at its origins stood three main sources: the historical past of the component parts which constituted the territory of the Republic of Moldova; the politics promoted on this territory by the Russian empire and later, by the USSR; the political strife for the survival of the Soviet empire and the quality of the society inherited from the totalitarian soviet system and its political processes, caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This *pseudo state* „problem” was created on 12<sup>th</sup> of October in 1924 on the Ukrainian territory, with the capital in Balta city, named Moldovan Soviet Socialist Autonomous Republic, *as a passing bridge for ideological and territorial expansion of the Soviet Russia towards Romania and as polygon for implementation of anti-Romanian Moldovan ideology by the means of a totalitarian regime*. Proof to that was the fact that in the constitution act of the MSSAR its Eastern frontier has been drawn not on Nistru, but on the Prut River<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>A. Țurcanu, *Sabatul sau noaptea vrăjitoarelor politicii moldovenești*, Chisinau, Cartier, 2000, p. 128.

<sup>8</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>9</sup>Oazu Nantoi, *Conflictul din zona de est a Republicii Moldova – o încercare de abordare nouă*, on [www.conflict.md/upload/File/oazu\\_2002.doc](http://www.conflict.md/upload/File/oazu_2002.doc);

<sup>10</sup>Oazu Nantoi, *Conflictul transnistrian – geneză, evoluție, perspective*, in *Destin românesc. Revista de istorie și cultură*, Chisinau, 2003, nr. 1, pp. 47 - 70.

<sup>11</sup>Ibidem, p. 48.

Actually, underlines Igor Munteanu<sup>12</sup>, Russia was conscious that the USSR disintegration generated a certain volatility of the frontiers between autonomous or independent post-soviet entities, uncontested before. Hence, in Moscow's opinion today, the European „security zone” of Russia must extend on the axe Baltic Sea – Black Sea – Azov Sea<sup>13</sup>. The separatist authorities counted from the very beginning on Moscow's encouragement, the biggest part of the Russian politic spectrum pronounced in favour of the Transnistrian politic leaders and official recognition of „Moldovan republic from Nistru”<sup>14</sup>. The fact is demonstrated by the meetings that took place in 1992, regarding Transnistrian problem, by Anatoli Zlenko, the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, which shared the same views with Andrei Kozîrev, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in support of the separatist regime, asserts Oazu Nantoi<sup>15</sup>.

According to Igor Munteanu, the major objective pursued by Russia in Transnistria was “the maintenance of Republic of Moldova under political trusteeship of the former post-soviet decisional center, using the Transnistrian region as a detonator wick, which could be fired up at any time, and at the same time, conferring its interests in region an *acquisitive* terminology (example given, the term “*blijnee zarubejie/the foreign proximity*” or “*obshcee prostranstvo, zveno SNG/common space, the instrument of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)*”, etc.)”. If the „Moldovan Transnistrian Republic” wouldn't exist, the Republic of Moldova would have been long time ago annexed to occidental structures, considers Munteanu, and Romania would have reach out to the Ukrainian borders<sup>16</sup>.

Nicolae Țău (which denominates the Transnistrian separatism ***a bomb with retarding effect for Moldova***) considers that this conflict was determined by separatists tendencies, directed and encouraged not only from the shadow by the pro-imperial forces, in realizing of their internationalist and geopolitical interests. The affirmations of interethnic dimension used for the strife weren't true, in reality it was a “political conflict concerning the rebirth of a new imperial structure”<sup>17</sup>.

Referring to the Transnistrian separatism, the author of many geopolitical studies<sup>18</sup>, Oleg Serebrian, asserts that it was generated, in 1989, due to ethno-linguistic problems (appeared after the expression of desire of autochthon population from Moldova in regard to the revival of the national culture), was one “of morphological essence, causing the Transnistrian fracture of

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<sup>12</sup>Igor Munteanu, *Moldova și CSI: o alianță fragilă*, in *Politica externă a Republicii Moldova, Materiale ale simpozionului științific internațional*, Chisinau, 16-17 octombrie 1997, Chisinau, CCIN Perspectiva, 1998, p. 232-247.

<sup>13</sup>Ibidem, p. 240.

<sup>14</sup>Ibidem, p. 234 - 236.

<sup>15</sup>Oazu Nantoi, *Conflictul transnistrian – geneză, evoluție...*, p. 58.

<sup>16</sup>Ibidem, p. 240.

<sup>17</sup>Nicolae Țău, *Politica externă a Republicii Moldova*, Bucharest, pp. 140, 179, 224.

<sup>18</sup>Oleg Serebrian, *Va exploda Estul? Geopolitica spațiului pontic*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1998; Oleg Serebrian, *Politosfera*, Chisinau, Editura Cartier, 2001.

Moldovan territory” and it had “a true geopolitical mobility if not for Tiraspol, but for Moscow and Kiev”<sup>19</sup>, while the geopolitical connotation of Transnistria is the same as in the case of Abkhazia for Georgia, which were „calmed down” by Kremlin and brought to CIS by the means of internal tensions.

In opinion of Oleg Serebrian, the geostrategic and geopolitic value of Transnistria “is not meant to control the Balkans or threat Ukraine, but only to control the Republic of Moldova”. In a paradoxical mode, the Republic of Moldova owes its existence mainly due to the Transnistrian problem: not only because the legal Moldovan contemporary state has its origin in MSSAR (1924), but also because if that conflict didn’t exist, then the independence of Republic of Moldova, taking into consideration the dominant situation of the Chisinau’s politic elite in December 1991, would turn into the descent of soviet flag from Kremlin and reunion of Bessarabia with Romania. The Transnistrian separatism was the reason that maintained the Republic of Moldova an independent state, inspired some issues in the new Constitution and obliged Chisinau to adhere to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)<sup>20</sup>.

For Chisinau, emphasizes the author, this region is even a factor of dominant geopolitics, but precisely this “geopolitical value” of Transnistria passes unobserved, as mysterious confusions are been looked upon in spatial interests with global, or at least regional, impact.

If considered in the context of geopolitical interests of Moscow, Transnistria doesn’t represent to Russian Federation a “gate towards Balkans” or means to “encircle” Ukraine, but only a lever to maintain the Republic of Moldova in the geopolitical sphere of Kremlin<sup>21</sup>.

Therefore, despite the fact the conflict focus was provoked by Moscow, afterwards, the profit of Ukraine (which, in fact, took care to have it maintained) was not at all lesser than Russia’s: respective strife belonging to Romanian-Moldovan-Ukrainian conglomerate problems.

Moreover, highlights the author, Transnistria is, in fact, a method of Kiev to action on Russia, there yet another interest of Ukraine to maintain the Transnistrian conflict. It was Kiev which encouraged, tacit, but evident, the secessionist movement of Transnistria, Ukraine being a true support for “Moldovan Transnistrian Republic”<sup>22</sup>. Moscow understands that the Transnistrian separatism can exist as long as Kiev permits it. Ukraine actions all the time favorably in regard to the Tiraspol – Moscow communication, the Transnistrian problem is one of the subjects able to maintain the „warmth” of the Kiev-Moscow dialogue<sup>23</sup>.

As stipulates the historian Gh. Cojocaru, in its work *1989 to the East of Prut*, as pretext to affirmation of the Transnistrian separatism by pro-Russian leaders served (many factors), among

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<sup>19</sup>O. Serebrian, *Politosfera...*, pp. 105, 119-121, 129-131; O. Serebrian, *Va exploda Estul?...*, pp. 122 - 124.

<sup>20</sup>O. Serebrian, *Politosfera...*, pp. 120 - 121.

<sup>21</sup>Ibidem, pp. 132, 231.

<sup>22</sup>Ibidem, p. 132.

<sup>23</sup>Oleg Serebrian, *Va exploda Estul...*, pp. 123-124.

others, was the decrees of laws regarding the state languages on the MSSR territory<sup>24</sup> and, by the end of 1989, the realisation of the secessionist project, held up by the imperial Moscow, both in Transnistria as in the South of MSSR, entered a decisive faze<sup>25</sup>.

Concomitantly, in one of his other works, the author affirms that the war from the Nistru river, had deeply implanted roots in history and was generated as a reaction to the decline and collapse of the Soviet empire, and the Transnistrian strife had the effect of an historical mine with belated consequences, the mine being placed by the Stalinist regime at the basis of MSSR, in 1940, or even earlier, in 1924, when was confectioned the Moldovan autonomous entity from Tiraspol, with the goal of extending the proletarian revolution beyond the Nistru river<sup>26</sup>.

In another work, Gh. Cojocaru mentions that the strategic objectives pursued by the pro-imperial forces in Transnistrian separatism would have been to compromise the credibility of the newly independent state and its possibility to integrate into the free world; the reconfiguration, through a military defeat, the process of detachment from CIS (meaning Russia), especially in the politic and military domains; discontinue the reunification tendencies of Moldova and Romania and elimination of Romanian elements access to the region; the reaffirmation of the incontestable leader role of Moscow in this part of South-Eastern Europe<sup>27</sup>.

Some more recent investigations on the dynamics of Transnistrian separatism problem, by same author from the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, include the impact of Russian-American relationship. As a result, Gh. Cojocaru communicates that after the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 caused a strong approach in the Russian-American relationship, which determined the parties to cooperate in settling the regional conflicts. In reality, it seems that Moscow doesn't wish to extinct this conflict hub, the perpetuation of which serves as a false pretext to prolong its military presence in the region. One way or another, both Russia, declaratively but not in facts, and the United States are interested in the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, but despite the new framework of Russian-American strategic relationship, their fundamental security interests in the Republic of Moldova if not reciprocal exclude, then neither converge. While Russia tends to deepen its roots in this zone in order not to permit Chisinau to detach definitively from the former Soviet space, the United States wishes to integrate the Republic of Moldova into South-East Europe<sup>28</sup>.

Relevant for the comprehension of the separatist phenomenon are the affirmations of historians and researchers regarding the beginning of the Transnistrian secessionism.

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<sup>24</sup>Gheorghe E. Cojocaru, *1989 la Est ...*, p. 116.

<sup>25</sup>Ibidem, p. 183.

<sup>26</sup>Cojocaru, Gh., *Separatismul în slujba Imperiului*, Chisinau, Civitas, 2000, pp. 6 - 10.

<sup>27</sup>Gh. Cojocaru, *Politica externă a Republicii Moldova*, Editura Civitas, Chisinau, 1999, p. 75.

<sup>28</sup>Gheorghe Cojocaru, *Criza transnistriană: o abordare americană (1991-2002)*, in *Destin românesc. Revista de istorie și cultură*, Chisinau, 2003, nr. 1, pp. 159 - 169.

The historian Anton Moraru, referring to the violent events in spring-summer of 1992, qualified it as *a war of Russia against the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova*, for conservation of the Soviet empire and establishment of Russian geopolitical domination in this region<sup>29</sup>.

In opinion of N. Munteanu, the Transnistrian separatism has mostly a politico-ideological character with brawls between different groups and parties for power, and its importance consists in the fact that it was encouraged by the geopolitical changes and intensified substantially by the successive actions of the actors involved<sup>30</sup>.

Andrei Groza affirms that at the basis of the Transnistrian separatism, provoked by interest groups, were “the imperial interests of Russia and not violation of Russian citizens’ laws, as affirm some, or action of Popular Front aimed to reunite all Romanians, as assert others”<sup>31</sup>.

In the opinion of historians Alexandru Roman and Stanislav Covalschi, the separatist leaders provoked on Nistru River a conflict of proportions, in order to extend the Russian presence on Moldovan territory<sup>32</sup>.

The strategic evaluation of the Transnistrian strife is treated as an integrate part of political, economical and social processes.

As underlines Anatol Gudim<sup>33</sup>, Russia set up a commercial strategy towards CIS states in which economic and political factors are closely linked. Analyzing the economic reality, A. Gudim identifies more types of threats to the economic security of Moldova, amongst which is the concentration of half of Moldovan industrial productions in the Transnistrian secessionist region<sup>34</sup>.

In the opinion of Oazu Nantoi, the regime from Tiraspol was permanently encouraged by great support from Russia<sup>35</sup>. Among the most important factors which contributed to the stabilization and validation of the separatist regime, are, on one hand, the political and economic interests of political forces and influent persons from the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and on the other hand, the economic interests of some „leaders” from Tiraspol and different persons on

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<sup>29</sup>Moraru, A., *Adevărul ca o picătură de rouă*, in *Conflictul din Transnistria: adevărul așa cum a fost el: Materialele conferinței științifico-practice, interesele de stat și rolul organelor de interne în asigurarea ordinii constituționale, drepturilor și libertăților omului în raioanele de Est ale Republicii Moldova*, Chisinau, 12-13 ianuarie, 1993, Chisinau, Logos, 1996, pp. 41 - 42.

<sup>30</sup>N. Munteanu, *Conflictele din Moldova văzute din exterior (studiu comparat)*, in *Securitatea și apărarea națională a Republicii Moldova*, Chisinau, Arc, 2002, pp. 258 - 262.

<sup>31</sup>A. Groza, *Ce caută Rusia în Moldova?*, in *Conflictul din Transnistria...*, p. 136.

<sup>32</sup>A. Roman, S. Covalschi, *Rolul distructiv al organizațiilor separatiste transnitrene (a.a. 90 ai sec. XX)*, in *Symposia Professorum*, Seria Istorie, Chisinau, Pontos, 2003, pp. 160-165.

<sup>33</sup>A. Gudim, *Securitatea economică și politica externă*, in *Politica externă a Republicii Moldova, Materiale ale simpozionului științific internațional*, Chisinau, 16-17 octombrie 1997, Chisinau, CCIN Perspectiva, 1999, p. 99-133.

<sup>34</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup>Oazu Nantoi, *Conflictul transnistrian – geneză, evoluție, perspective...*, p. 59

both sides of Nistru, which materialize through committing of economic crimes against the Republic of Moldova<sup>36</sup>.

Analysing the economic dimension of the independence of the Republic of Moldova, the author Didina Țăruș, concludes that the independence and integrity of a state is influenced by the development of great powers and the Transnistrian separatism is a *post-imperial syndrome* which undermines the socio-economic dynamic of the country<sup>37</sup>.

Another aspect of the Transnistrian separatism is the military presence on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. The Transnistrian separatist regime is owed, to a large extent, to an illegal implication of military forces of the Russian Federation into this zone.

According to the arguments expressed by M. Druc in his memories<sup>38</sup>, the real stake of the Russian military presence in Moldova would have been the maintenance of the Russian influence in Balkans, which has only two focal points in the Central and Eastern Europe: Kaliningrad and Tiraspol.

How informed us Mihail Gribincea, in his studies of incommensurable value, effectuated on Russian military bases<sup>39</sup>, the only military sources of the Transnistrian separatists were the armament storage of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army, the principal military forces dislocated on the territory of the Moldovan SSR, created in November 1956, after the merging of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Soviet army, part of the Odessa military district<sup>40</sup>.

The paper of an overwhelming importance „The Russian Legion in the Republic of Moldova”, written by Mihail Grecu and Anatol Țaranu<sup>41</sup>, has the goal of elucidating through inedited before documents, the role of the Russian legions in causing and development of the armed conflict from Nistru in 1992. The paper also presents the impact of the existence of Russian legions on the situation in the Republic of Moldova and explains the means the Russian legions from Moldova were used by Moscow to make pressures on the Republic of Moldova with the aim to maintain it in its sphere of influence. Thus, the authors underline that after 1991 the dissatisfaction of Moscow increased the pressures on Chisinau through supporting the separatist forces from Transnistria<sup>42</sup>, while the „pacification forces” from Transnistria were and

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<sup>36</sup>Ibidem, p. 64.

<sup>37</sup>Didina Țăruș, *Dimensiunea economică a independenței*, in *Destin românesc. Revista de istorie și cultură*, Chisinau, 2001, nr. 4, pp. 70-77.

<sup>38</sup>Mircea Druc, *Lupta cu ultimul imperiu*, Bucharest, 1998, p. 170.

<sup>39</sup>Mihail Gribincea, *Trupele ruse în Republica Moldova. Factor destabilizator sau sursă de pericol?* Chisinau, Civitas, 1998; Mihail Gribincea, *Politica rusă a bazelor militare: Georgia și Moldova*, Chisinau, Civitas, 1999.

<sup>40</sup>Mihail Gribincea, *Politica rusă a bazelor militare...*, pp. 155 - 171.

<sup>41</sup>Mihail Grecu, Anatol Țaranu, *Trupele ruse în Republica Moldova. Culegere de documente*, Chisinau, Litera Internațional, 2004..., p. 4; Iurie Pinteș, *Aspectul militar în soluționarea conflictului din zona de Est a Republicii Moldova*, in *Aspecte ale conflictului transnistrian (1992-2000)*, Chisinau, IPP, 2001, pp. 94-138.

<sup>42</sup>Ibidem, p. 7.

continue to be utilised by Moscow as a defense shield for the separatist authorities from Tiraspol<sup>43</sup>.

Therefore, as reported by the majority of authors from the Republic of Moldova, the essence of the Transnistrian separatism consists in the geopolitical and geostrategic interests of Russia, alimented by its economic politicly towards Moldova and assured by the presence of the 14<sup>th</sup> army the Eastern part of the country.

*Pro-separatist historiography of Transnistria and the Russian Federation* – the scission of the Soviet Union into 15 independent states constituted the most important event at the end of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. Touched in its own vanity and deprived by the Central-European area and its influence in the ex-Soviet republics, the Russian Federation felt obliged to redefine its political relationships with the neighbourhood countries and the occidental world, right from the beginning.

Following an ultra-liberal period, Moscow set the goal to reconquer its former empire. One of the means to achieve this served the propaganda methods. The historiography, besides mass-media, is another important link in justification of the territorial expansion and appartenance to the Russian Federation of ex-Soviet enclaves.

Transnistria wasn't an exception. Therefore, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in Russia appeared a series of works, whose authors, depending on certain state interests, not always pointed out this problem in an unbiased manner. In this context, remarkable are some works signed by V. Preahina<sup>44</sup>, V. Lîsenko<sup>45</sup> and others.

It is necessary to mention that the „enclaves” from the ex-Soviet area, in general, and the Transnistrian separatism, in particular, were analysed by specialists from different disciplines: conflictology, sociology, political science, history, etc., both from the Russian Federation and the left part of the Nistru River. In accordance to this, the theories of Russian political scientists on the Transnistrian separatism are usually impregnated with *pan-slavic* and *pan-orthodox* determinisms, as with Russian imperial nostalgia, as argueded in his article Evghenii Klimov, „*Moldova in the Context of Russian Geopolitical Interests in the South-East of Europe: History, Actuality and Perspectives*”<sup>46</sup>.

An interesting idea on determination of the Russian Federation's expansionist politics towards ex-Soviet republics, expressed I. Toporovski in its article „*La Communauté des États*

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<sup>43</sup>Ibidem, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup>В. Пряхин, *Региональные конфликты на пост-советском пространстве (Абхазия, Южная Осетия, Нагорный Карабах, Приднестровье, Таджикистан)*, Москва, ГНОМ и Д., 2002.

<sup>45</sup>В. Лысенко, *Региональные конфликты в странах СНГ: опыт урегулирования*, Полис. 1998, № 2, сс. 147-158.

<sup>46</sup>Evghenii Klimov, *Moldova în contextul intereselor geopolitice ale Rusiei în Europa de Sud-Est: istorie, actualitate și perspective*, in *Politica externă a Republicii Moldova*, Chisinau, 1998, p. 183-200.

*Independents*<sup>47</sup>, where he identifies three factors which determined Russia to change its real politics towards ex-unional republics during 1992-1993, and especially, the disintegration processes which weren't stopped yet, reached the autonomous republics of the Russian Federation; the transparency of the frontiers became a threat for the Russian security, due to the infiltration of Islamic and Turkish elements; the worsening of the Russian minorities situation in more republics became the acutest issue of Russian internal politics, birnging back into discussion the legitimacy of its power, considered responsible for the USSR explosion.

Another work of the Russian author, Galinsky I.N<sup>48</sup>, represents a brief argumentation in the favor of international recognition of the independence of Transnistria, having confirmed the right to secession by the Moldova's aggression towards Transnistria in the beginning of 1992<sup>49</sup>.

Both in the Eastearn as in the Western parts of the Republic of Moldova appeared a series of studies analyzing the Transnistrian strife. But the qualifications of the preliminary separatist events and justification of this process have its specifics.

Commonly, the authors from the East of the Republic of Moldova and some researchers from Chisinau, present the interests of separatists and illegal regime from Tiraspol, established in the Eastern part of the republic. This works fits conveniently into a delimited category with a certain precision, in this case, representing the literature which serves unconditionally the politics of an empire and the interests of its dominant nation.

In very frequent cases, some characterize the launching events of the separatism as „acts of aggression of the Republic of Moldova against the *Moldovan Transnistrian Republic*”<sup>50</sup>, an “absurd..., criminal, inhuman, barbarian...” war<sup>51</sup>, and the guilt for the unsolving conflict, in most cases, is attributed to the Chisinau authorities.

Others, which by the means of diverse publications edited on the left bank of the Nistru River, attempt to cushion the historical truth, attempting both to underestimate the role of Russia in launching of the Transnistrian secessionism, and to justify, under different aspects, the actions undertook in destabilization of the situation in the Eastern zone of the Republic of Moldova<sup>52</sup>. I. Smirnov himself, in his memories declared that the Transnistrian separatism started as a “war

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<sup>47</sup>I. Toporovski, *La Communauté des États indépendents*, in *Relations internationales et stratégie*, 1994, nr. 13, p. 133.

<sup>48</sup>I. N. Galinsky, *Prednestrovië: Right to form a sovereign state*, Tiraspol, 2005.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 7-8.

<sup>50</sup>*Самая большая сила*, Тирасполь, Типар, 2002, p. 49.

<sup>51</sup>Н. В. Бабилунга, Б. Г. Бомешко, *Дубосары – кривоточящая рана Приднестровия*, Тирасполь, ПГКУ, 1993, с. 2; Бабилунга Н. В., Бомешко Б. Г., *Бендеры: расстреляные, непокореные*, Тирасполь, Типар, 1993.

<sup>52</sup>Н. В. Бабилунга, Б. Г. Бомешко, *Приднестровский конфликт: исторические, демографические, политические аспекты*, Тирасполь, РИО ПГУ, 1998, с. 41-42; *События в Приднестровье (Вестник Правительства Республики Молдова)*, Кишинэу, Университас, 1994; Г. П. Валовой *Кривавое лето в Бендерах. Хроника приднестровской трагедии*, Бендеры, Полиграфист, 1993.

between Moldova and Transnistria”, “an unjustified war, of invasion – for Moldova, and a national one, of liberation – for MNR”<sup>53</sup>.

Both researchers from Tiraspol and the Russian Federation do not hide the fact that the Transnistrian separatist enclave was supported by Moscow and that the strife has a geopolitical character.

In this way, the researcher from Tiraspol, B. G. Bomeshko, considers that “in 1924 took place an event, that put the basis of the actual problem (meaning Transnistria, o.n.). Back then began the exchange process – till then formal – of the state ownership of the Transnistrian grounds, namely then... began the Transnistrian problem, appeared only due to political reasons, caused by the effect, of that time, of the „Bessarabian question”<sup>54</sup>.

In his memories, published in Moscow, the separatist leader Igor Smirnov<sup>55</sup>, recognizes that not only the separatist actions from Tiraspol were supported by the military and political elite of the former USSR, but also that their actions were coordinated with Moscow.

The researchers from Tiraspol inform us that at the moment of the Transnistrian separatism start up, the main political base of the conservative part was residing in Transnistria and it was directly subordinated to Moscow<sup>56</sup>.

Therefore, the political separatism in the Eastern part of the Republic of Moldova was initiated and promoted by certain organizations with diverse character. The historians<sup>57</sup> of the separatist regime from Tiraspol admitted that the famous UCLC (OSTK) (the United Council of Labor Collectives) was consisted in majority by marionettes – the deputies of pretense local and supreme soviets not recognized in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, the transnistrian historians concluded that „the unique real and general organ – recognize by Transnistrian powers became OSTK, composed by representatives of the strike committees and the labor committees...”<sup>58</sup>.

Tiraspolian specialists recognize that the initiative of organizing multiple “congresses” and “referendums” with secessionist character belong to Transnistrian separatist organizations<sup>59</sup>.

Also, some authors from Moscow confirm that „namely within the framework of OSTK, more intensively circulated the idea of creation of the Transnistrian republic...”<sup>60</sup>.

The author V. Prohnitski, considers the Transnistrian strife as one of the most difficult preserved conflicts in the post-Soviet space<sup>61</sup>, ascertained both by geopolitical and national

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<sup>53</sup>Игор Смирнов, *Жить на нашей земле*, Москва, 2001, с. 74.

<sup>54</sup>Н. В. Бабилунга, Б. Г. Бомешко, *Преднеэтровский конфликт...*, с. 8.

<sup>55</sup>И. Смирнов, *Жить на...*, р. 70-71.

<sup>56</sup>*Феномен Преднеэтровия*, Тирасполь, РИО ПГУ, 2000, с. 192.

<sup>57</sup>Н. Бабилунга, Б. Бомешко, О. Скалецкая, *Преднеэтровский конфликт...*

<sup>58</sup>*Ibidem*, р. 25.

<sup>59</sup>В. Н. Яковлев, *Бессарабский вопрос и образование Преднеэтровской Молдавской Республики. Сборник официальных документов*, Тирасполь, 1993, с. 82, 85, 98, 106-107; В. Я. Гросул, *Карагаи – минувший и нынешний (История одного преднеэтровского села)*, Москва, 2001, с. 271, 272.

<sup>60</sup>*Непризнанная республика*, том. 4, Москва, 1999, с. 65.

factors. The Transnistrian conflict, stipulates the author, passed many times from the political dimension to the economic one, authorities from Tiraspol succeeding to demonstrate convincingly to Chisinau that they dispose of sufficient instruments to influence the economic security of the Transnistrian Moldova and, thus, orient the negotiations into the necessary direction<sup>62</sup>.

Even from the beginning of the Transnistrian separatism, Russian Federation, by the means of its researchers, didn't delay to declare its true interests in the Eastern zone of the Republic of Moldova.

Therefore, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1993, in Moscow, during a seminar with a limited character „*The Perspectives of the Transnistrian Conflict Settlement*”, organized by the Russian Association for International Relations Theory and Modeling, at whose work sessions participated also representatives of the Academy of Sciences of Russia, were identified the following needs which determine Russian interests in Transnistria: to preserve Russia's strategic position in the South-East of Europe; to defend in Moldova the interests of the Russian population and the representatives of other nationalities which look up to Russia as their historical native land; to preserve cooperative links with industries from Transnistria, some of which are unique within the framework of the military-industrial complex; to settle the conflict in order to fit the internal stability interests and consolidate the relationships between Russia and neighboring countries in which live Russian minorities; to establish more predictable and stable relations with Romania and not to admit the growth of its nationalist influence on Moldova<sup>63</sup>.

In another paper work, „*OSCE and Transnistria*”, having the title of a didactic material, published in 2000, in a reduced edition of 100 copies, under the auspices of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, the authors, approaching the problem from the perspective of Russia's participation in finding of the definitive solution of the Transnistrian conflict, formulated the next interests of Russia in Moldova: „The *de facto* existence of an independent Transnistria permits Russia, without too much efforts and costs, to preserve certain geopolitical positions in an extremely important region of South-Eastern Europe that represents for Russia an important „window” to Europe. For the time being, Russia is not capable enough to defend its interests in this strategically important region. In consequence, most probably, the unsolved Transnistrian problem will remain for Russia a positive factor as long as

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<sup>61</sup>V. Prohnițchi, *Securitatea economică a unui stat mic. Note de reper pentru Republica Moldova*, in *Securitatea și apărarea națională a Republicii Moldova*, Chișinău, Arc, 2002, p. 176.

<sup>62</sup>Ibidem, pp. 154-155.

<sup>63</sup>*Перспективы урегулирования преднестровского конфликта*, Москва, 1994; *Безопасность, Информационный сборник Фонда Национальной Безопасности*, № 1-2 (январь-февраль), 1994, с. 52-54.

it needs time to accumulate new forces and resume its capacity to dynamically defend its interests in this zone”<sup>64</sup>.

The authors Vladimir Kolossov, director of the Center for Geopolitical Studies, of the Geography Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Andrei Tchepalyga, researcher at the same center, in their article *Le conflit de transnistrie ou les limites du droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes*<sup>65</sup> referring to the importance of Transnistria, remark the fact that „for the vast regions Transnistria is an element of junction between Eastern Europe and Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Central and Meridional Europe”<sup>66</sup> and „the constant change of political frontiers of Moldova depend on the geopolitical forces rapport”<sup>67</sup>.

The authors also underline that the fragments of territories belonging to the new states (as Moldovan Transnistrian Republic, Abkhazia in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in Azerbaijan) auto-proclaimed themselves independent republics, **undoubtedly with the support of external forces.**

In the opinion of a Russian researcher, V. Lisenko, the Soviet imperial disintegration provoked numerous seisms of political and social-economic order, generated about 170 conflict zones, 30 of which manifested in an active form, and 10 of them developed into armed confrontations<sup>68</sup>. The one in the Eastern region of the Republic of Moldova, reassures the author, denominated “Transnistrian” under typological aspect, is certainly one of those ten.

K. Litvak, recognises that **the Russian support to the republic from Nistru constituted the essential factor** which complicated the unification process of Moldova with Romania<sup>69</sup>.

Pal Kolsto, Andrei Edemsky and Natalya Kalashnikova, inform us that the Russian political personalities, as Albert Makashev, Vladimir Jirinovski, Aleksandr Nevzorov, which came on a „pilgrimage” tour to Tiraspol, **took a position in the favor of separatists and encouraged military intervention**<sup>70</sup>.

According to Raimond Piotrovshii, PhD, university professor from Santk-Petersburg, the decree of the Moldovan language as state language was only one of the pseudo-reasons to

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<sup>64</sup> *ОБСЕ и Приднестровие*, Москва, 2000, с. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Vladimir Kolossov, Andrei Tchepalyga, *Le conflit de transnistrie ou les limites du droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes*, in *La Russie et son ex-empire. Préconfiguration géopolitique de l'ancien espace soviétique* (coord. Yan Breaud, Pierre Jolicoeur, Jacques Lévesque), Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2003, pp. 227-256.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 230.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 233.

<sup>68</sup> В. Лысенко, *Региональные конфликты...*, с. 147.

<sup>69</sup> К. Litvak, *The Role of Political Competition and Bargaining in Russian Foreign Policy: The Case of Russian Policy Toward Moldova*, in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 29, 1996, nr. 2, p. 217.

<sup>70</sup> P. Kolsto, A. Edemsky and N. Kalashnikova, *The Dniester conflict: Between irredentism and separatism*, in *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 45, 1993, nr. 6.

unleash the Transnistrian war, which would intensify the lesion of the interests of the national minorities, while the true causes were others<sup>71</sup>.

Out of the studies of the authors both from Transnistria and Russian Federation, it is obvious that the Transnistrian separatism has a geopolitical character, and namely Russia's vital and secular interests in this zone.

The conclusion that can be reached after such an excursion, is that the history of the Transnistrian separatism resides mostly in the *political zone*.

Generally speaking, literature is more or less a deformed „mirror” of the real society, adjusted to the conscious or unconscious desires of the authors and especially, taking into account the interests, prejudices, sensibilities or neuroses of the researchers which fabricate this mirror<sup>72</sup>.

As it is ascertained, on the whole, the researchers dwell upon the Transnistrian separatism problem from the position of the environment they were rooted in, projecting their research results on the present and the future, or out of the need to aliment and decode their identity, to feed their imagination – following this point of view, the history representing a veritable therapy for the restlessness and anxieties of our time.

Therefore, the historians from the Republic of Moldova (including the Transnistrian territory), that treat the separatism subject were divided into two fundamental tendencies: pro-Romanian and pro-Russian. Some of the specialists from the Transnistrian space and Russia, so-called the pro-separatist historiography – against time appearance – include the same ideas regarding the MSSAR history. Albeit, generally speaking, all authors both from Transnistria and the Russian Federation, recognise the impact of the Russian Federation in generating and perpetuating of the Transnistrian separatism.

The majority of sources admit that the Transnistrian separatism was unleashed, oriented and especially alimented with Moscow's support, through a multitude of means of pressure, military or not (politico-diplomatic, imago logic, informational, psychological and economic). Most of the authors agree with the idea that the separatism on the Nistru River didn't constitute a problem of ethnical character, but most likely a question of political essence – Russia using the national sentiments as „alibi” to satisfy its political and strategic interests. The true stake of the Russian military presence in Moldova constitutes the maintenance of its influence in the Eastern Europe. Indeed, Russia has only two bridges towards the Central and Eastern Europe, Kaliningrad and Tiraspol.

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<sup>71</sup>R. Piotrovșchii, *Moldova în perioada post-sovietică. Probleme lingvistice*, in *Conflictul din Transnistria: adevărul așa cum a fost el*, Chisinau, Logos, 1996, p. 112.

<sup>72</sup>Simona Nicoară, *Istorie și imaginar. Eseuri de antropologie istorică*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000, p. 222.