Boundaries, Territory and Postmodernity

Edited by
DAVID NEWMAN

FRANK CASS
LONDON • PORTLAND, OR

Contents

Pseudo-States as Harbingers of a New Geopolitics: The Example of the Trans-Dniester Moldovan Republic (TMR)

VLADIMIR KOLOSSOV and JOHN O'LOUGHLIN

In the late twentieth-century, optimistic forecasts of a 'global village' premised on internationalisation[1] are challenged by studies picturing the future in more dramatic colours. Important reports, like those of the Club of Rome, the 'Global 2000' report to President Carter of the United States, the reports of the United Nations-sponsored Brandt Commission on the 'North-South' gap and the Brundtland Commission on the global environment, paid great attention to the gap between the developed countries and the Third World. The reports argued that the global disparities undermine the sustainability of human civilisation but they did not discuss the possibility of an appearance of non-western civilisation models nor did they consider consequences of a global geopolitical restructuring. As documents issued during the Cold War, they took it for granted that geopolitical era would continue and remained silent on the nature of political forms of the twenty-first century, expecting the sovereign nation-state format to remain hegemonic.

Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis trumpeted the end of large-scale conflict in the democratised world but recognised the probability of local wars continuing in the global periphery. Recent works by US commentators challenge this optimistic scenario and cast doubt on such crucial notions as 'progress' and 'democracy'.[2] The limits of the western 'civilisation of consumption' can be defined and recognises a world of disparity and 'a West versus the rest'.[3] A network of islands of 'transitional' or 'incomplete' statehood is emerging and we refer to these states as 'pseudo-states'. These

pseudo-states have achieved varying but low levels of recognition by the international community, are highly involved in local wars whilst their unsettled political status makes further conflict possible. They typically constitute part of what Robert Kaplan has called the 'ends of the earth', places where 'scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet'.[4]

Another set of 'quasi-states'[5] with fungible territorial control is predicated on criminal or quasi-criminal organisations, frequently specialising in the production and sale of drugs, as well as the illegal traffic of weapons and in the laundering of 'dirty money'. They also maintain an interest in the processing of the flows of transnational speculative capital. This network of 'well organised chaos' is becoming a stable and more and more unavoidable part of the post-modern geopolitical reality, coexisting uneasily with the developed world. Moreover, it has some appendices inside the settled world, for example, in urban enclaves.[6] These quasi-states are 'non-institutionalised" and represent a conglomerate of areas under the authority of local chiefs, field commanders, big landowners and/or drug barons. These local leaders can co-operate but cannot conduct wars of 'all against all', and are thus half-institutionalised since they are unlikely to control their territory permanently. Current examples include the Gorno-Badakhshan (Tajikistan), Garm region (Tajikistan), Kurdistan, Northern Afghanistan, 'Golden Triangle', Shan region, Western regions of Cambodia, Western Sahara, southern Sudan, southern Angola, Sierra Leone, and the Medellin part of Columbia. In this paper, we maintain a distinction between pseudo- and quasi-states; this separation allows us to focus on pseudo-states as important, emerging elements of the world political map.

The 'underground' geopolitical world of pseudo-states is relatively neglected by English-speaking social scientists and by political geographers, who traditionally focus their studies on the developed world and on the formal politics of recognised and stable states. Like Peter Taylor,[7] we believe that any political geography worth its name and relevance must confront the whole world, with all its disparities of wealth, comfort, security, ethnic relations and democratic norms. In this article, we turn our attention to those places that have recently experienced civil or interstate wars and where political control and external relations are still under dispute. Most of our 'geopolitical black holes' are barely-visible in the geopolitical codes of Western strategists, who focus on states that have global resources or that have important historical or cultural ties to the core countries

We remain sceptical of descriptions of post-modernist political and social organisations and forms because of the Western biases and blinkered

world-views implicit in such accounts.[8] We find it highly ironic that groups and factions are intent on creating that most modern of all projects, the nation-state, in these supposedly postmodernist times. At first glance, the profusion of territories that are either self-proclaimed states (Chechnya), recognised by a few neighbours or a single neighbour (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), controlled by an ethnic or political faction (Gorno-Badakhshan) or the object of continuous military skirmishing or serious fighting (Liberia, Somalia, South Sudan or Afghanistan) supports the modernist project of making even more 'nation-states'. Regardless of the reasons for the attempts to carve out smaller and smaller autonomous territories, there seems no end in sight. We believe that the globalisation hype has overstated the imminent demise of the territorial state.[9]

Kaplan exaggerates both his regional descriptions and the global impact of conflicts in the 'ends of the earth'.[10] Only states in the vicinity of the conflicts seem to maintain significant and durable interests in the ebb and flow of political control at the centre and the challenges to central authorities. Russia, above all, is implicated in the pseudo-states because of its pivotal location bordering on many conflict regions and, coincidentally, because of the presence of ethnic Russians in newly-independent titular republics of the former Soviet Union. As both an instigator and a supporter of many armed insurrections, Russia continues to exert significant geopolitical influence on its neighbours in the 'Near Abroad'. Contemporary Russian geopolitical codes intersect with local political and national mobilisations to produce a complex mix of identities, territorialities and state-building projects in places as geographically dispersed as Tajikistan, Abkhazia, and Transniestria.[11]

Most of pseudo-states are situated along the frontiers of large 'civilisations': between their cores – West Christian (Catholic and Protestant) and the East Christian (Orthodox Russia), between both of them and the Arabic-Turkic-Muslim world, and between Russia and the Chinese world. Dramatic events in the periphery of the core areas of great civilisations and uneasy relations between the core and their peripheries as well as between peripheries, cannot be reduced to the scheme proposed by Samuel Huntington. However, the concept of 'limitrophs' – geopolitically-unstable spaces between civilisational platforms – is very useful in our discussion.[12] Indeed, Huntington understands 'civilisations' as mostly areas of the great world confessions. Obviously, civilisations are based not only on religions (Huntington's reduction) but on a complex of ideas and representations cementing culture, social practice and geopolitics. As one moves from the core area of a civilisation, some of the features that define the civilisation disappear and are replaced with new ones that are more characteristic of neighbouring civilisations. Usually, the areas of limitrophs

154

are in the state of cultural, religious and ideological self-defence from the nearest civilisation that threatens their identity. Geopolitical uncertainty and instability is especially pertinent along the borders of the former Russian Empire-Soviet Union; this zone includes the so-called 'Great Limitroph', abandoned by Russia and identified as the Balto-Pontic belt separating Russia from the core of Europe all the way to Manchuria. Limitroph geopolitics is one of the main reasons for the emergence of pseudo-states. Which feature is considered more important in defining a particular limitroph depends on the geopolitical players and on realities of the geopolitical time-space convergence. The concept of limitroph, unfortunately, continues to be predicated on the traditional geopolitics of force and zones of influence.

In this article, we offer a preliminary classification of pseudo-states. We consider the elements and strategies of state-making in the pseudo-states in the absence of international recognition. We compare four pseudo-states that have emerged from the debris of the Soviet Union and have been the scenes of significant violence in the past decade. Finally, we provide a lengthier case study on one of these pseudo-states, Transniestria.[13]

Classification of Pseudo-States and Quasi-States

The apparently fixed cartography of the world political map yields the false impression that state control extends to the boundaries of neighbouring countries in all cases. It seems probable that states are undergoing functional, rather than spatial changes, with greater permeability and increased sharing of political spaces in some world regions and new, bigger fences in other parts of the world.[14] It seems improbable that pseudo-states emerge only as a result of power relations between major countries, because, as David Knight noted, the international community consisting of mostly multiethnic and multicultural states is clearly motivated to maintain the status quo.[15] Attempts to gain self-determination by indigenous ethno-cultural groups certainly play a role in pseudo-state formation.

Some states maintain a tenuous territorial hold on their territories. By the early 1990s, 27 states were not in full control of their respective territories. Between 1945 and1990, 14 states chronically did not exercise full control over their territory whilst civil wars occurred between 1945 and 1990 in 41 states. In 15 states between 1945 and 1990, foreign forces occupied at least a part of the territories of other sovereign states.[16] In 1996, 24 states had 27 continuing civil wars; only one conflict (India and Pakistan) was inter-state.[17] There is a downward trend in the number of conflicts during the 1989-96 period. The marginal, usually frontier-like, territories under dispute are frequently the locations for the pseudo-states under consideration in this paper.

It is possible to make a tentative and preliminary classification of pseudo-states. A first category can be labelled 'institutionalised' pseudo-states, those units that have declared sovereignty, have all necessary attributes of a 'normal' state, and are in full control of their territories. However, these pseudo-states are not recognised and have little chance of recognition by the international community or by most neighbouring states. Current examples include the TMR, Chechnya, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Serb republic of Bosnia, Kosovo, Somaliland, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Another method to classify pseudo- and quasi-states is by genesis and functions. Examples include first, self-identification of an area with a specific nationality (Northern Cyprus or Palestinian Autonomous Areas); second, the splintering of an empire or large multi-national state (such as Abkhazia or Chechnya); third, areas of conflict with no permanent control as a result of a civil war and/or a foreign military intervention (such as Afghanistan or Bosnia); and fourth, pirate states based on criminal-terrorist activities (Somaliland, 'the Golden Triangle' or the area of the Medellin cartel in Columbia).

Pseudo-states are typically located in the Shatterbelts of sub-Saharan Africa and Central Eurasia (the Balkans to Afghanistan through the Caucasus).[18] The zones of contact between empires and civilisations, and areas of mixed populations with complicated, hierarchically-organised identities can be considered as geopolitical black-holes. Competing with each other over long historical periods, empires have typically disputed these areas, which frequently shift as a result of war from one side to another, giving rise to blurred and immutable forms of identity, and in turn, often becoming the objects of special manipulation on the part of interested political forces and powers. The Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic (TMR), our case study, provides a good example of such a frontier area. This territory is situated on the border between the Roman cultural realm, the nomads of the Great Steppe and the East Slavic world. It lies in the gateway from the East European plain to the Balkans and southern Europe. Historically, Transniestria was a border area between the Russian and Ottoman empires (like Chechnya and Nagorno-Karabakh).

Uncertainty, Territory and Mobilisation at the Century's End

We live in an age of 'groupism', according to Immanuel Wallerstein.[19] With the weakening of state control in many parts of the world and in the face of economic globalisation that has irrevocably altered the relationship between citizens and their governments, the construction of defensive groups is understandable in regions in which the old certainties have collapsed. Foremost among these regions are the former Communist states where

integration into the world-economy after 1989 corresponded to the collapse of the existing political-economic apparatus. Attempts at 'ethnic-based' state construction have already led to war in Georgia and Moldova, created serious problems in Latvia and Estonia, and have provoked a massive exodus of non-titular populations from Kazakhstan, as well as several of the other new republics in Central Asia. Typically, the defensive groups assert identities around which they build solidarity and struggle to survive against other, neighbouring groups. One of the most effective ways to assert this new or re-discovered identity is to assert territorial control that demarcates a region as belonging to the group in question and not to others.[20] The eventual aim of most of these new ethno-territorial groups is international recognition that can be shown by three criteria: membership of the United Nations, political sovereignty and economic autonomy; a distinctive national culture that is both primary and primordial; and political development and separation over time. The conundrum of the principle of self-determination, promulgated most forcibly by US President Woodrow Wilson, is that the people cannot decide on self-determination until it is decided who the people are. The Wilson doctrine has close echoes in the principles of the Leninist national policy of the same era – self-determination, abstract equality and development.[21]

The concept of identity is a thorny one, though it is not usually acknowledged as such by the activists engaged in political struggle. As noted by Brian Graham, it remains an amorphous concept, comprising elements of political allegiance, citizenship, cultural and ethnic nationalism, and constitutional preference.[22] The hegemony of the nationalist identity, persisting for over a century, now extends into the next millenium. Nationalism is recognised by its autonomy, unity and identity trilogy to which we must add territoriality.[23] For Robert Sack, territoriality is always a means to an end, and is used for classification, communication and enforcement of control. Most importantly, territoriality can help engender more territoriality in a space-filling format, whilst Kaiser notes that indigenous national territoriality has produced a reactive national territoriality among non-indigenous groups in the former Soviet Union, especially those living across the border from their former home republic.[24] In the vast literature on the origins of identity, there seems to be a preponderance of agreement that identity is socially constructed and not primordially ordained. Whilst a nation may be a 'self-aware ethnic group' in Walker Connor's terms, this awareness is generated, manipulated and directed by political, social and economic activists.[25] Our theory of nationalism argues that whereas ethnic/cultural distinctiveness is a necessary condition for nationalist identity, it is not sufficient. The construction of an identity, whether for economic, territorial or cultural

control, is needed in order to maintain a nationalist posture. The fact that dozens of ethnic groups do not exhibit the smallest vestiges of nationalism offers powerful evidence for the social construction approach. Many studies of nationalist construction offer clear evidence of the role of the newly-independent state, as well as that of nationalist intellectuals and the educated classes before independence. Other studies have supported the observation that 'if there is any conclusion to be derived from such a study of the *longue durée* of a small nation, it might be that a nation is never fully made'.[26]

Studies of nationalism usually assume that nationalist identity is singular, predominant and unchanging but recent works have challenged these assumptions, especially for the emergent nations of the former Soviet Union. The concept of 'matrioshka nationalism' has special appeal, with identity a singular identity for a group, especially in the new states that correspond to the republics of the former Soviet Union, it is often more appropriate to accept the possibility of many attachments that can be national, local, ideological or super-national. Thus, in the Russian-populated provinces of eastern Ukraine, many residents find it hard to identify with one political territory because of inter-marriage between the ethnic groups and an attachment to some elements of the 'Soviet identity'.[28] For political leaders faced with confusing, multiple or unformed identities, the challenge of constructing an uncontested identity that conforms to the territorial boundaries of the state and that cuts across pre-existing ethnic loyalties is a major task.[29] In pre-independent Ireland in the late nineteenth century, public memorials were especially effective in promoting and defining a revived Irish identity. Fundamentally, identity for both the individual and the community depends on a 'positive and supportive representation of place'.[30]

Writers on nationalism frequently make a neat dichotomy between a west European or North American type of nationalism, based on civic (territorial) attachments, and an east European version that is based on ethnic majority, is exclusionary and rejects a multi-cultural state.[31] The distinction is extended to that between *jus soli* (citizenship based on residency) and *jus sanguinis* (citizenship based on membership of the nation); the US and Germany are considered as the model cases of each type. Some post-Soviet states, such as Ukraine, clearly opted for a civic model, as the new authorities were faced with a high proportion of the population (about 22 per cent) that did not belong to the titular Ukrainian nation. The lack of significant ethnic conflict in the state can be taken as evidence of the success to this point of that strategy.[32] By contrast, other post-Soviet states, especially the two Baltic republics with large ratios of

Russians, Latvia and Estonia, tried initially to implement the ethnic-based definition of citizenship and introduced language rules to make it very difficult for non-titular groups to obtain citizenship despite length of residency. In Moldova, initial post-independence trends seemed to favour majorities that would push the ethnic agenda but within a couple of years, the nationalist position had been shunted aside by the electoral strength of cross-ethnic movements that stressed the civic nature of the state.[33]

For our discussion of the state-making efforts in the TMR, we need to provide some background on the pre-independence situation in the territory and in other Soviet republics. The Soviet nationalities policy that emerged in the 1920s was a mixture of concessions to the myriad of ethnic groups in the vast state and centralised control from Moscow. The central elements were recognition of titular groups and allocation of special privileges to these groups in Russia and in the other 14 republics, an attempted construction of a Soviet mentality and identity that would supersede the ethnic loyalties of the regions, a promotion of Russian as a *lingua franca*, and the settlement of Russians and other groups in all territories.[34] The federal structure clearly motivated the various *indigenes* to construct and define a home and, despite national ideology about equality, the Russian population was clearly *primus inter pares*, although not in terms of well-being and incomes. The combination of a strong sense of belonging to a territory and the resentment against Russians as a privileged group was easily translated into national exclusion and an ethnic-based nationalism after 1989, especially in Central Asia and the Baltic republics.

In Soviet times, group identity was (inadvertently) promoted by the disproportionate allocation of skilled, industrial and state jobs to Russians in Kazakhstan, Central Asia and partly in Transcaucasia, whilst in other republics, groupism was maintained by a cultural division of labour between Russians and the titular populations. Russians occupied jobs mainly in industry and construction (especially as engineers and technicians), health care, science, and applied technical research and teaching; titular peoples were concentrated in agriculture, research and teaching in the social sciences and humanities, cultural pursuits and in the state apparatus. The rise of the educational level of titular ethnic groups and their demographic pressures led to increasing competition between Russians and titular peoples for the prestigious jobs, and this competition was easily transferred into an ethnic one. Feelings of relative deprivation came into play and the kind of mobilisation fostered by resentment considered instrumental in rebellion could be seen in many of the republics even before 1989.[35] Russians living outside of Russia perceived a decline in their living standards as the indigenous majority took control of the state apparatus and widespread emigration, especially from the Central Asian

republics, resulted. In many newly-independent states, an alliance between Russians as the new minority and 'third-level' national groups, who had become small minorities in the same weak position relative to the new majority (e.g. Jews in Abkhazia), occurred in states such as Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and other republics of Central Asia. In their speeches, Russian politicians widely exploited the theme of the civil rights of the Russian minorities in former Soviet republics but did little to aid their co-ethnics in political and cultural fields. Only in recent months have these (conservative) political figures succeeded in drawing international attention to the fate of the Russian minorities in the Baltic states.

In post-1989 conflict near its borders, the Russian state came to the aid of both Russians and the other minorities. In the most violent situations, the main objective of the Russian state was to stop violence in regions that bordered Russia. Despite some controversy both internally and externally in 1992-93, due largely to the dynamics of internal politics in the struggle for power in Moscow, Russia frequently adopted the peacekeeping mantle. In the four pseudo-states on which we focus (Abkhazia, the TMR, Chechnya and Nagorno-Karabakh), Russia was heavily involved, as either a protagonist or as peace-builder, in the wars that helped to make these pseudo-states.

After the ceasefires, the construction of a new or forgotten identity was high on the agenda of the new regimes. As Tom Nairn has remarked, nationalism is Janus-like in looking back to a historical legacy and forward to a programme of continued national construction.[36] For both large groups, like Ukrainians, and small groups, like Latvians, the chequered history of the nation was re-visited and selectively clarified, whilst the separatist identity during the decades of Soviet control was recognised and lauded. For small groups in multi-ethnic territories, such as the Russians in the TMR, the situation was more delicate and required a much more sophisticated and multi-faceted construction of identity. As relative late-comers (only after the incorporation of the Trans-Dniester region in 1792 into the Tsarist empire, did Russians settle in the region in force) and as a 29 per cent minority, the Russian elite perforce had to choose a civic, territorial identity as the only option for construction of the new Transniestrian identity.[37]

The government of TMR declared separation from Moldova late in 1991 shortly after the break-up of the Soviet Union consequent on the failed putsch in Moscow in August of that year. Like any new political regime, the TMR government was faced with the dilemma of creating the state apparatus but, additionally, had the task of promoting its domestic and international legitimacy by maintaining the separate state as well as

engaging in state-making. Raising revenues and an armed force, as well as seeking international recognition, became immediate priorities for the TMR. The low-grade war with Moldova, which simmered in late 1991 and exploded in significant violence in June 1992 before the intervention of Russia's 14th Army ended the fighting, occurred at a time when the crisis in Yugoslavia was escalating rapidly and, thus, the conflict along the Dniester did not achieve the kind of prominence in the Western media that such violence might usually have warranted. The complex inter-ethnic security dilemma combined with belligerent leadership and hostile masses on both sides to evolve to war.[38] Despite strenuous attempts by the Yeltsin government in Russia, the intervention of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe), the election of a less nationalist government in Moldova in 1994, and a series of trilateral meetings (Russia, Moldovan and TMR negotiations), the political situation is still at a geopolitical stalemate. The central demand of the TMR government for a special recognition within the Moldovan state has still not been accepted by Chisinau (Kishinev in Russian).

As a 'civic nationalism', the Transniestrian identity that is now being promoted by the government in Tiraspol does not single out one ethnic group for pre-eminence but recalls instances of local, non-ethnic histories and instances of Transniestrian territorial demarcations in its icons. The antecedents of the present state are viewed as pre-existing and the population composition as evolving over a long period of time. 'During the nineteenth century, a polyethnic pattern of population was evolving in the Dniester region and a single socio-political and historical-cultural entity was taking shape – the people of (the) Dniester region.'[39] A recent series of TMR stamps, for example, has scenes of pre-historic humans chasing animals and making fires. The *Atlas of the Dniester Moldavian Republic*, published by the Dniester State Corporative TG Shevchenko University in 1997 in both Russian and English, further declares that 'In 1924, (the) DMR region gained its first ever statehood, earlier than Moldavia, when the Moldavian Autonomous SSR (MASSR) was established within the framework of the Ukrainian SSR with the capital in Tiraspol... The statehood on (sic) Dniester region was established in 1990 for the second time.'[40] The explanation for the formation of the new state is provided in a brief, but clear, sentence. 'After the adoption by Moldova's parliament of a series of discriminatory laws, especially the laws on languages and the ouster (of) regional deputies from Moldova's parliament, the people of (the) Dniester region had no option but to seek adequate measures to protect their rights and human dignity.'[41] A museum to memorialise the battle of Bendery (the city on the west bank of the Dniester that was the scene of the most intense fighting in June 1992) has now opened in that city, replete with

commemorative banners, books, videos and picture albums.

The promotion of a civic kind of Transniestrian identity is, obviously, not uncontroversial. The government in Tiraspol has been assailed for its repression of the Moldovan identity and language[42] and as many 'histories' exist as there are parties to the Transniestrian conflict. It is not our intent to present the dimensions of the many-sided continuing conflict in this article; indeed, this would easily fill volumes. As a pseudo-state and without strong external supporters, the TMR is vulnerable to the internal centrifugal pressures of a poly-ethnic society and, like many post-independence African states, the TMR faces an uncertain future. But as the East German experience has shown, identities can form rather quickly and, in turn, make future political –territorial resolutions more intractable. In a time of conflict, identities can switch and become modified in surprising ways.[43]

Ethno-Cultural Conflicts and the 'Separatist Manifesto' in the Post-Soviet Geopolitical Space

New titular-based states emerging from the ashes of the former Soviet Union discovered that the formal attributes of sovereignty do not guarantee true independence, much less the consolidation of a stable and strong state. State building appears to be a difficult task whose realisation typically requires several generations. Success along this arduous route depends, in large part, upon the identity or the *raison d'erre* chosen by the nascent state. Two choices are predominant. The first is whether to favour the self-determination of a titular (or 'principal') population, thus constructing a nation-state in the best 'exclusionist' image of the European states of the past century. The second alternative is to attempt to construct a 'super-structural' (civic) state that heeds compromise between the common interests of all its population(s), assuring each ethnic group the right and the means to preserve and develop its language, culture and traditions. If the state is not neutral between competing ethnic groups and not equally protective of all identifiable groups, groups may resort to their own devices. As one of the causes of the civil war in Moldova in 1990–92, the actions of the Popular Front in Moldova (promoting restrictive language laws that threatened the hegemonic position of Russian in the newly-independent state) generated a feeling of insecurity by the Russophone minority, though accommodation of Russian minority views might have been possible without the interference of Russia and the machinations of the military-political elites in the TMR.[44]

The formation of a stable country requires that the political regime govern a stable territory and a 'fixed' population, whose majority holds confidence in this regime. It has become a cliché that a regime can only be

considered as democratically stable after the passage of at least three consecutive legislative and/or presidential elections with successive (and peaceful) transfers of power accompanying them. None of these conditions has been fully realised in many of the successor states of the Soviet Union: democracy is too 'new', the populations are prone to emigration or frequently involved in nationalist, regionalist and separatist movements directed against the regimes in power. Hirschman's trilogy of exit (out-migration to ethnic homelands by minorities), voice (rebellion by minority groups or by majority titular groups against minorities) and loyalty (a quiet resignation to the new geopolitical realities) can easily be documented in the Caucasian and Central Asian successor states.[45] In addition to these formal political strategies, considerable segments of the territories of the new successor countries have refused to submit themselves to effective control by the central authorities. They have become the domain of local elites and clans but retain the continued appearance of a functioning central state. Within the ex-Soviet republics, all three elements of the state (the regime, the territory and the population) are contested at once, a combination that renders the situation more unstable than other world regions.

The weakness of the new states places in question the system of international relations predicated on stability and affects geopolitical organisation not only in the post-Soviet space proper, but in Europe as a whole. After a territorial transformation generated by a separatist movement is legitimated by the international community, there is the risk of 'infection' in neighbouring countries, harbouring their own disputes and dormant conflicts.[46] The mass exodus of non-titular populations can, similarly, disrupt the national as well as economic equilibria of neighbouring states, thus launching a contagious process of geopolitical transformations, particularly dangerous in the form of refugee influxes and forced migrations.[47]

It is useful to look comparatively at four cases (Chechen Republic in Russia, the Moldavian Republic of Transniestria, Abkhazia in Georgia, and the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh in Azerbaijan), where the governing parties of the new republics have openly proclaimed themselves independent republics, a kind of 'Separatist Internationale' (Table 1).[48] Taking advantage of external support and the prevailing economic and political chaos, as well as the emergent conflicts between the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, these actors succeeded in reconfiguring the geopolitical order after the implosion of the USSR. Though there is no single path to conflict, combinations of ethnic competition, external involvement, the security dilemma and elite manipulation can easily result in violence.[49] There is a real (though

diminishing) risk that the example of the independence movements cited above will be followed by other minority peoples in the Russian Federation or in other countries emergent from the ex-USSR.[50]

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF VICTIMS AND MATERIAL DAMAGE IN MILLIONS OF U.S. DOLLARS (ITALICS) IN THE SELF-PROCLAIMED REPUBLICS IN THE FORMER USSR.

Region	Nagorno-Karabakh	Transniestria	Abkhazia	Chechnya
1988-89	100 *20*	0 *0*	0 *0*	0 *0*
1990	400 *30*	0 *0*	0 *0*	0 *0*
1991	500 *40*	0 *0*	0 *0*	0 *0*
1992	14,000 *130*	800 *380*	3,800 *750*	0 *0*
1993	2000 *60*	0 *0*	8,000 *1,500*	0 *0*
1994	0 *20*	0 *0*	200 *50*	4,000 *1,200*
1995	0 *0*	0 *0*	0 *0*	25,000 *2,500*
1996	0 *0*	0 *0*	0 *0*	6,000 *1,800*
Total	24,000 *300*	800 *380*	12,000 *2,300*	35,000 *5,500*

Source: Zverev et al., 1997.

The summary figures for the four conflicts shown in Table 1 clearly demonstrate that the Chechen conflict was significantly more violent and destructive than the other three wars. In a shorter time-span, about the same number of people were killed and more damage occurred than in the other three wars combined. The Nagorno-Karabakh war predated the collapse of the Soviet Union whilst the other three wars began after the formal end of the USSR in 1991. Though the estimate for those killed in the TMR war is 800, higher estimates suggest that about 1,000 were killed on both sides.[51] Nationalist conflicts were certainly the result of the weakening and later transformation of the power structure tied to the weakening and later

disappearance of the USSR, a super-centralised state whose repressive apparatus had successfully 'frozen' all traditional and potential ethnic conflicts. The Cold War arrangement of a hierarchical power dominating a 'geostrategic realm' was thus replaced, bit by bit, by a great number of smaller multi-polar systems embracing not only the previous Soviet republics and their regions, but also neighbouring countries.[52] The "security dilemma", provoked by one group attempting to improve its relative position, thus resulting in a perceived loss for other groups, is critical to understanding conflict escalation and possible peace arrangements.[53]

The profile of the pseudo-states resulting from the four wars varies considerably.[54] Transniestria lies at the juncture of the great macroregions of Europe – Eastern Europe and the Balkans – as well as Central and Southern Europe. In the words of the former commander of the Russian 14th Army in the TMR, General Alexander Lebed, Transniestria is the 'key to the Balkans'.[55] The geographical location of Chechnya has, during recent years, become strategic. The discovery of oil and the start of its exploitation in the Azerbaijanian shelf of the Caspian Sea puts the future transport of oil by pipeline to the Black Sea on the geopolitical agenda. The oil transit issue strongly influences relations between Russia and a number of other CIS states and, in a wider context, between Russia, Iran, Turkey and the West. Russia is extremely interested in using the existing pipelines that cross Chechnya to pump Caspian Sea oil and Chechnya, in turn, would like to obtain as much revenue as possible for the transit rights. These oil-transit revenues are central to the calculation of the chances of the economic viability of the Chechen pseudo-state and the separatists are able to reject Russian entreaties for co-operation because of expectations of a bounty from oil transport.

The ethno-cultural heterogeneity of Transniestria and Abkhazia, or the clear domination of titular peoples in Chechnya and Nagorno-Karabakh would not suffice, in themselves, however, to predict the extremity of the conflicts that exploded after 1989. Rather, we should point to the role played by the wide chasm between the groups involved in the conflicts. Enormous cultural gaps divide the turcophone, Muslim Azeris from Christian Armenians as well as separate Orthodox Georgians from the Abkhazis, who speak an entirely different language and are partly Orthodox. (Azeris are also part Muslim but mostly non-religious). In the case of Moldova, it was the disappearance of the USSR and subsequent machinations of elites in the respective capitals, Chisinau and Tiraspol, that engendered the conflict; in the other three cases, the end of the Soviet Union merely revived pre-existing cultural-ethnic divides. The absence of conflicts with the Moldovan republic prior to 1990 distinguishes the TMR from the other self-proclaimed republics, where the ethnic conflicts date back several centuries

or, at a minimum, for several decades.

The crisis phase of the conflicts began, in three of the four cases, by legislative acts implemented by the new parliaments of the republics, elected in 1990 on the wave of democratic (and often nationalist) opposition to the communist regime. It is pointless to ask who took the first step because each successive response amounted to an escalation of the conflict. One view argues that, whilst the Moldovan nationalist fronts made aggressive anti-Russian language moves in 1989 and 1990, it was the response of Moscow and its allies in Tiraspol that allowed the conflict to escalate.[56] Prevailing perceptions of menace, the necessity to mobilise all the forces of the nation to face this impending menace and the lack of time and inclination for a reasoned response all contributed to create the right environment for the explosion of hostilities.

The conflict in Moldova is the most 'internationalised' as the number of internal and external parties involved is much higher than in the Caucasian conflicts which have been largely regional and domestic. Yet in each case, the development of the conflict has tied external and internal factors into a single knot, erasing any clear distinction between domestic and international actors. Political issues are surely at the forefront for most of the metropoles; only Transniestria played a significant role in the economy of its metropole prior to the implosion of the USSR. Mimicking the independent states' quest for a new identity, separatists within the metropoles have structured their struggle around a number of 'threats', to the integrity of their territories, to their national spirit, to the loyalty and confidence of their citizens; the security dilemma is therefore broadened. A final theme centres on the question of the military presence of great powers in the region – a presence that may be real or potential, desired or undesirable. From the separatists' perspective, the key questions revolve around the threat to the very existence of the cultural or national minority, and the associated risk of its assimilation, dispersion, and oppression. Again, it is only in Transniestria that local economic factors have played a role with a separatist strategy to take advantage of the TMR's relative economic power vis a vis the rest of Moldova.[57]

Since the cessation of the civil wars, no definitive political solutions have been found. One of the external reasons for the utter failure of all attempts at negotiation and mediation can be found in the instability of the entire system of international relations in the post-Soviet era. It is notable that the division of responsibilities in the space of the ex-USSR between Russia and the Western political community, along with the ambiguity of the internal situation and the foreign policy initiatives of Russia, has helped to both shape and stabilise the geopolitical situations. The Russian Federation was the only external guarantor of the ceasefire in Abkhazia

while sharing this role with Ukraine and Romania in the TMR. It was clearly the direct intervention of Russian troops as 'forces of separation' that assured the completion of the Transniestria accords, a situation repeated in Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia. The final balance of military power and the shape of the ceasefire arrangements was imposed by the Russian forces. In the eyes of anti-Russian movements, these arrangements favour the pro-Moscow forces. Open hostilities continued in two conflict zones, Chechnya and Tajikistan, in 1996 but political dialogue has brought ceasefires to Chechnya, the Trans-Dniester region and South Ossetia. The conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia remained deadlocked.[58]

The Trans-Dniester Moldovan Republic

The conflict between Transniestria and Moldovan central authorities is a rare example of recent conflict based in cultural (rather than ethnic) divisions involving several states. (See Figure 1 for the location of the TMR in its regional setting). Compared to other post-Soviet conflicts, the genesis of violence in Moldova can be considered quite atypical.[59] A more detailed review of the evolution of this pseudo-state and its external relations with its neighbours will allow consideration of the kinds of choices and constraints facing pseudo-states.[60] Because of its southern European location, the situation in Transniestria affects non-FSU states more directly than the Caucasian wars and the TMR conflict can easily become dragged into current disputes about the boundaries of NATO Europe and relations with the Russian Federation.[61]

More than 50 per cent of the population of the TMR have a mixed ethnic background. Most people simultaneously mix an ethnic identity with one as an inhabitant of the post-Soviet space (i.e. the CIS), or simply label themselves as a 'Soviet citizen'. Residents of the TMR most often identify with Moldova as a whole whilst simultaneously considering themselves as (ethnic) Russians, Ukrainians, or Moldovans, as well as inhabitants of Transniestria. The regional component of identity with the pseudo-state of Transniestria is growing and the state authorities of the TMR purposefully develop the identity by cultivating the representation by political and ideological symbols (iconography). This representation is particularly based on the history of settlement of Transniestria as a part of the Great Steppes, in which Slavic and other peoples played important roles, and the periods of separation of Transniestria from the rest of Moldova. Transniestria was included in the Russian Empire in 1792 as a result of the Iassy treaty with the Ottoman Empire, whilst the Moldovan territory between the Prut and the Dniester was obtained by Moscow only in 1812. The TMR territory experienced two historical expressions of self-identification and a separate

FIGURE 1

THE LOCATION OF THE TMR IN ITS REGIONAL SETTING

Location of the TMR

Administrative Units of the TMR
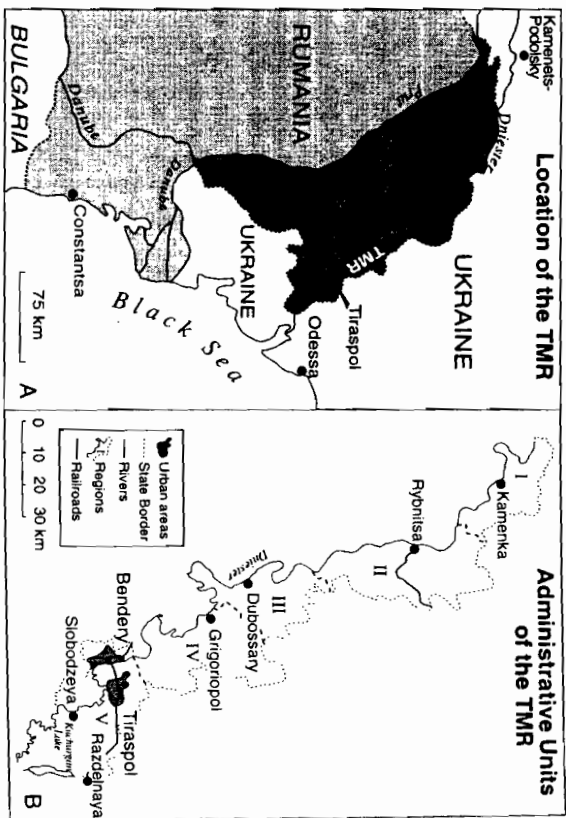
statehood of Transniestria, as the Moldovan Autonomous SSR in Ukraine (1924–40) and in the current pseudo-state since 1990.

More than 90 per cent of participants of the referendum (85 per cent of electors) in January 1990 about the establishment of the TMR voted in favour of it.[62] At the same time, as often happens in such border zones,[63] Transniestrians can manipulate their identities and citizenship. The Transniestrian citizenship is not recognised anywhere and Moldova does not allow a Russian consulate in Tiraspol (capital of the TMR), despite the great number of Russian citizens there. Many Transniestrians, therefore, illegally have two or three passports, typically those of Transniestria, Russia and Moldova.

Eight years after the declaration of sovereignty, TMR has all the attributes of a normal state, except for international recognition. These characteristics include a constitution adopted by referendum, an elected parliament and president, formal government, a system of security (police, an army of 5,000 to 7,000 men, and custom services), a system of elected local administration, and a (weak) currency. In the summer of 1997, the TMR finally succeeded in stabilising its rouble, after years of galloping inflation.[64] The TMR persists, despite blockades and obstacles to foreign economic relations with its main market and raw materials supplier, Russia.

The Geopolitics of the Four Powers – Russia, Moldova, Transniestria and Ukraine

For nearly a half-decade after the severe violence of 1992, Transniestria refused to sign a joint document with Moldova. The TMR argued that, according to its Constitution adopted by referendum, it was an independent country and, therefore, any formula establishing a common basis of the two Moldovan states would be anti-constitutional. The TMR leaders declared also that jumping directly to the solution of the most difficult general political problems was a mistake and they opted instead for step by step confidence-building negotiations. When the Transniestrian leadership, finally in 1997, agreed to participate in the preparation of such a joint document, the position of Moldova had toughened. From the Russian perspective, if the Moscow government fails to succeed to make progress and the abilities of the Russian Federation in peacemaking in the post-Soviet space become seriously undermined, the West would be well placed to replace Russia as the regional peacemaker.'[65] In 1997, Russian diplomacy did its best to persuade both Moldova and the TMR to return to the negotiating table and to compromise. A real breakthrough under this Russian pressure brought Petru Luchinschi of Moldova and Igor Smirnov (the TMR president) to a solemn signing in Moscow on 8 April 1997 of a Memorandum on relations between Moldova and the TMR. The document was also signed by Presidents Yeltsin and Kuchma (Ukraine), and the acting Chair of the Organisation of Co-operation and Security in Europe (OCSE), General Petersen. The key article of the Memorandum is its Article 11 stipulating that Moldova and the TMR 'will build their relations in the framework of a common state within the boundaries of the Moldovan SSR by January 1998'. The Memorandum thus confirmed the common future of both sides, as well as autonomy for the TMR, in particular in the field of external economic activity.

Integration of the TMR with Moldova will not follow the example of German reunification, because it is politically impossible to merge 'mechanically' Transniestria and Moldova given the legacy of the conflict and, especially, the 1992 war. The leadership of Moldova hopes that economic collapse and other material realities of day-to-day life will push the TMR toward re-unification. But rational economic reasons rarely work in such situations. Forces of self-identification and the opposition of 'us' to 'them' in critical and transitive historical periods (as is currently the case in Moldova) are often much stronger than the most urgent economic needs.

The 'Triangle': Chisinau–Tiraspol–Moscow

In accepting the compromise formula, President Luchinschi of Moldova in fact accepted the idea that the conflict in Transniestria in principle cannot be solved without Russia. At the same time, Russia let Moldova know that it would continue to consider Chisinau as the sole representative of both Moldovan states, if Chisinau rejected rapprochement with NATO and did not allow any foreign (Western) military presence on its territory. Pre-empting NATO encroachment into the Balkans is a more important geopolitical aim for Russia than the protection of pro-Russian elites in the TMR.

Peacekeeping remains the principal task of the 'Operative Group of Russian Troops in Moldova' (the current name for the remnants of the 14th Russian army). A second task is the protection of the huge warehouses of weapons and of military equipment accumulated over decades near Tiraspol, which had served as the headquarters of the Southern Strategic Direction of the Soviet Army, making it the major springboard of all operations in the Balkans and south-eastern Europe. At the CIS summit in Chisinau in 1997, President Boris Yeltsin clearly stated: 'The politics of Russia towards Transniestria consists of the fact that Moldova is united and indivisible. We shall deal only with it in this way. All remaining questions will be solved only via Chisinau.'

From time to time, Tiraspol likes to demonstrate its economic and political independence from Russia. Since 1996, Tiraspol has patiently awaited an additional company of Ukrainian peacekeepers that were invited to protect the bridges under repair across the Dniester but Kiev has not answered this request. Moreover, the TMR agrees to use the repaired bridges only if they are protected by Ukrainians, arguing that a limited presence of Ukrainian peacekeepers will reduce Ukrainian anxiety about Moscow's intentions in the TMR. Moscow clearly does not like this move and the Russian foreign minister (now prime minister) Yevgeny Primakov responded that 'there was no need for an additional contingent of peace-keepers'. Ukraine, like Russia, officially supports Moldova. The TMR obviously worries that its relations with Ukraine will be complicated by the possible creation of a new political bloc within the CIS (including Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova) under the auspices of Kiev aimed at the isolation of Russia. Being very interested in the viability of this bloc and the participation of Moldova in it, Ukraine could easily sacrifice its relative benevolence to Tiraspol. However, this issue largely depends on the outcome of the presidential elections in Ukraine in 1999.

With respect to future geopolitical scenarios for resolution of the crisis, the options remain as they were at the time of the crisis of 1990–92. These

scenarios include 1. the Ukrainian option, in which the TMR is included in Ukraine either as a 'normal' oblast, as an autonomous territory within the existing borders, as a part of the recreated Moldovan Autonomous Republic using the 1940 borders or in exchange for the Kiliya territory of the Odessa oblast to Moldova, thus giving access to the Black sea; 2. the Russian option with the TMR included in the Russian Federation as a republic after a referendum; 3. the independence option, in which the TMR remains for a small independent state; and 4. the Moldovan option, in which the TMR is included in the Moldovan state as either a set of administrative units (*Anschluss*), as an integral autonomous territory with special rights for the Russian and the Ukrainian population and languages, or as a constituent part of a confederation accepted by both sides. In the heat of conflict in 1992, the former Moldovan leader, Mircea Snegur, rejected TMR autonomy in Moldova, itself a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, but he accepted this option in 1994.

Since 1993, public opinion polls in the TMR show consistent percentages of respondents choosing the following options: to join Russia, 26–27 per cent; to enter Ukraine, 16 per cent; to create a federation or a confederation with Moldova, 56–58 per cent (Private communication from Professor Vladimir Grosul, Tiraspol, 24 September, 1997). The government of the People's Front that came to power in Chisinau after the first democratic elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Moldovan SSR in 1990 tried to suppress the Transniestrian multiethnic cultural minority first numerically and then by force.[66] As a reaction, Transniestrian requests rapidly escalated, according to the 'classical' scenario, from a demand of a 'free economic zone', often a hidden form of separatism, to an autonomy within a united Moldovan state, then later to the creation of a federal state and, finally, to a confederation.

In 1998, the official TMR position in building relations with Moldova consists 'in the creation of the common state on a confederal basis and on the issues of partition, of delegation and of integration of competencies by two *equal* subjects'. (Private communication from First Deputy-Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the TMR, Vladimir Atamaniuk, 25 September 1997; his emphasis). The TMR insists that it should keep its separate constitution. Having its state symbols and the right independently to decide questions of domestic and foreign economic relations, the TMR suggested to Moldova that both sides declare the whole territory of the former Moldovan SSR as a demilitarised zone. Moldova answered that its army was a necessary and an obligatory element of Moldovan statehood.

The probability of a new outburst of violence in Transniestria now seems to be small. But if violence is not used, there are few signs that the *status quo* in the conflict will change despite the obvious continuing

economic losses to both the TMR and to Moldova. Over time, the economies of both the pseudo-state, Transniestria, and the rump state of Moldova are adapting to the current situation. Whilst the well-being of the citizens on both sides of the Dniester is more likely to improve with a *rapprochement*, the political elites on both sides have learned to exploit the current situation for their own benefits. Only an economic disaster or significant pressure from below can force the TMR leadership to retreat from its *de facto* sovereignty.[67] In the end, it appears that only patient and continuous efforts by the international intermediaries – Russia and Ukraine – and of the international community as a whole will help to bring about a political, federative solution of the Transniestrian conflict.

Conclusions

Radical geopolitical shifts in the former Soviet Union and in other East-Central European countries in the late 1980s and the early 1990s have generated ongoing issues of transition: How to assist democratisation without supporting the evils of nationalism and separatism? How to defend the civil rights of ethnic minorities without stimulating 'reactive' nationalism? How to develop the principles of federalism to accommodate the claims of ethnic regions for self-determination and for autonomy without promoting the disintegration of the existing state system? Recent events in Kosovo with all the implications for spillover effects into the adjacent states of the Balkans confirm the continuing importance of these issues of ethnic territoriality and the need to resolve traditional political-geographical problems in the context of the *fin-de-siècle*.

In trying to resolve nationalist conflicts, it is essential to avoid a revival of the lines of classical geopolitics, which manufactured a bi-polar world and juxtaposed the West against the East. Both sides were guided by traditional stereotypes of eternal geopolitical interests and by 'natural' friends and foes. Common and unavoidable interests of all states must remain in the foreground; this global interest forms the main basis of what we can call the 'geopolitics of interdependence'. Separatism has typically deep ethnic, religious, economic, historical and political roots. The experience of such protracted conflicts as those in Cyprus, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Kurdistan and Palestine show how important it is to reveal the reasons for the relative stability of national political and regional identities and/or the rapid changes in these beliefs consequent on recent developments.

Most geopolitical black holes exist in the poorest regions of the world or in areas that are in the throes of difficult transitions. Such regions typically do not cross the televisual gaze of Western viewers except in times of

extreme crisis, such as famine or genocide, or in instances when the global interests of the Western states, especially the US, are challenged. Frequently, central governments cannot put an end to separatist movements and take full control of state territory by force because of paucity of resources or because of international constraints on violent suppression; typically, it is in Europe (the former Yugoslavia, for example) that the constraints are most evident. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine that member-states of the UN will allow legalisation of quasi- or pseudo-states, as in the case of the former Yugoslavia. There are often powerful economic and political forces interested in maintaining the *status quo*: some of the new Russian big businesses needed economic chaos in Chechnya for the laundering of dirty money, for illegal imports and exports, and for the expropriation of money that the central government had allocated for the pacification of this region.

A federal solution can be found for some of the current pseudo-states located closer to the world's political and economic core, who abhor the existence of regions of instability with attendant risks of refugees and conflict spill-over near the core's borders. In these areas, including the TMR, internationalisation can triumph. But the semi-permanence of the pseudo-states can also be anticipated as new members of the 'underground internationale' and its veterans remain elements of the world's political map in the absence of a co-ordinated external pressure to settle uneasy and temporary territorial compromises.

NOTES

1. See Daniel Bell, *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Book, 1973); Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation-State: The Rise of Regional Economics*. (New York: Free Press, 1995); and Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Bantam Books 1971).

2. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, Z., *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty First Century* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons 1993) and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

3. See Jacques Attali, *Millennium: Winners and Losers in the Coming World Order* (New York: Times Books 1991) and Paul M. Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Random House, 1993).

4. See Robert Kaplan, *To the Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (New York: Random House, 1996).

5. We distinguish these unrecognised quasi-states from the quasi-states identified for Africa and other parts of the Third World by Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). In Jackson's work, quasi-states are legally-independent states, full members of the international community (including the United Nations) but they lack many of the marks and merits of empirical statehood expected after independence from the European colonial powers. Constitutional sovereignty is the only kind that exists in the late twentieth century

and while the quasi-states meet this criterion, they have failed to achieve the economic standards and equal protection of all citizens that are the hallmark of states with 'positive sovereignty'.

6. See Alexi I. Neklessa, 'Perspektivy mirovogo razvitia i mesto Afriki v Novom mire: Sotsiaino-ekonomicheskii aspekt' (The perspectives of the global development and the place of Africa in the New World: A socio-economic aspect). *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia* 8 (1995a); *Krakh istorii, ili kontury Novogo mira? Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia* (The failure of history, or contours of the New World? – World Economy and International Relations) 12 (1995b); 'Postmodernisskii mir v novoi sisteme koordinat' (The post-modern world in a new system of co-ordinates) *Vostok*. (1997).

7. See Peter J. Taylor, *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality*, 3rd Edition (New York: Longman 1993), p.x.

8. We agree with the view expressed by David Newman that Western academics tend to adhere to the 'boundary disappearance thesis' since they themselves experience no boundaries in their contacts, research communities and identities as international scholars. David Newman, 'Boundaries, territories and postmodernism: Towards shared or separate spaces', Paper presented to the Fifth International Conference on Borderlands under stress, Durham, UK, 15–17 July 1998, pp.4–5.

9. In this perspective, we share the same view as William H. McNeill in his critical review in 'Territorial States Buried too Soon', *Mershon International Studies Review* 41 (1997), pp.269–74. McNeill offers a strong critique of the work of Yale H. Ferguson and Richard W. Mansbach, *Polities: Authority, Identities and Change* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

10. Kaplan (note 4).

11. For a discussion of the Russian geopolitical views, see A. P. Tsygankov, 'From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism: The Foreign Policy Discourse of Contemporary Russia', *Mershon International Studies Review* 41 (1997), pp.247–68.

12. The concept of limitroph is very similar to that of shatterbelt popularized by Saul B. Cohen. *Geography and Politics in a World Divided* (New York: Random House 1963). For more details on limitrophs, see V. Zimbursky, 'Narody mezhdu zivilizatsiami' (Peoples between civilisations), *Pro et Contra* 2 (1997), pp.154–84.

13. We will use the term 'Transniestria' and 'TMR' throughout this paper to refer to the self-declared autonomous region in eastern Moldova, east of the Dniester river. The official name is the 'Dniester Moldovian Republic' (DMR) or sometimes 'Transdniester Moldovian Republic' (TMR) after the Russian 'Pridnestrovskoi Moldavskoi Respubliki' (PMR).

14. Newman (note 8), p.12.

15. David B. Knight, 'Identity and Territory: Geographical Perspectives on Nationalism and Regionalism', *Annals, Association of American Geographers* 72 (1982), pp.512–31.

16. For more details, see John MacMillan and Andrew Linklater, *Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1995), p.250.

17. SIPRI, *SIPRI Yearbook 1997: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

18. We use the term 'Shatterbelt' following Saul B. Cohen. 'A New Map of Global Geopolitical Equilibrium', *Political Geography Quarterly* 1 (1982), pp.223–42. Though Cohen defined the shatterbelts in the early 1980s as sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and South-east Asia, we believe that the definition fits Central Eurasia and sub-Saharan Africa better at the turn of the century, nearly 40 years after Cohen's original use of the term. We find the elements of the definition that stress the cultural complexity and uncertain political control most appealing; we are less persuaded by the relevance of the elements of the importance of resources and external power geopolitical interests. In his most recent work, 'The Geopolitics of the Evolving World System: From Conflict to Accommodation', in Paul F. Diehl (ed.) *A Road Map to War: Territorial Dimensions of International Conflict* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999), Cohen now claims that the shatterbelts are disappearing in the aftermath of the Cold War and in the context of the formation of new geopolitical regions.

19. Immanuel Wallerstein, *After Liberalism* (New York: New Press, 1995), pp.6–8.

20. Alexander B. Murphy, 'Historical Justifications for Territorial Claims', *Annals, Association of American Geographers* 80 (1990), pp.531–48; David Newman, 1998; Anssi Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border* (Chichester: John Wiley, and Sons, 1996); and Anssi Paasi, 'Geographical Perspectives on Finnish National Identity', *Geojournal* 43 (1997), pp.41–50.

21. Sir Ivor Jennings, *The Approach to Self-Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

22. See Brian Graham, 'Contested Images of Place Among Protestants in Northern Ireland', *Political Geography* 17 (1998), pp.129–44 and Peter Shirlow and Mark McGovern 'Language, Discourse and Dialogue: Sinn Fein and the Irish Peace Process', *Political Geography* 17 (1998), pp.171–86.

23. The authors in the collection of papers on nationalism focus on autonomy, unity and identity at the expense of territory. See John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

24. See Robert D. Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*, (London: Cambridge University Press 1986) and Robert J. Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

25. Walker Connor, 'A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a ...', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1 (1978), pp.379–88.

26. Ronald G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd edn. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.17. See also Robert Argenbright, 'The Soviet Agitational Vehicle: State Power on the Social Frontier', *Political Geography* 17 (1998), pp.253–72; L. Drobizheva, 'The Role of the Intelligentsia in Developing National Conciousness Among the Peoples of the USSR Under Perestroika', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14 (1991), pp.87–99; and Paasi, 1996.

27. Matrioshka nationalism takes its name from the famous Russian wooden dolls that are layered inside each other. For the original use of the term, see Ray Taras, 'Making Sense of matrioshka Nationalism', in Ian Bremner and Ray Taras (eds.) *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.513–38.

28. Sven Holdar. 'Donbass: On the border of Ukraine and Russia', in Werner Galluser (ed.), *Political Boundaries and Coexistence* (Bern: Peter Lang 1994), pp.43–51 and Paul S. Pirie, 'National Identity and Politics in Southern and Eastern Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, (1996), pp.1079–1104.

29. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn. (New York: Verso, 1991); David Newman and Anssi Paasi 'Fences and Neighbours in the Postmodern World: Boundary Narratives in Political Geography', *Progress in Human Geography* 22 (1998), pp.186–208; and Anssi Paasi, 'Nationalizing the Everyday Life: Individual and Collective Identities as Practice and Discourse', paper presented at the International Geographical Union's Commission on the World Political Map conference on Nationalism and Identities in a Globalized World, Maynooth, Ireland, 16–23 August 1998.

30. See Nuala C. Johnson, 'Sculpting Heroic Histories: Celebrating the Centenary of the 1798 rebellion in Ireland', *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* NS 19 (1994) pp.78–93 and Graham (note 22).

31. See Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, (New York: MacMillan, 1945) and Clifford Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States', in C. Geertz (ed.) *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (New York: Free Press, 1963), pp.107–13.

32. One of the key efforts to build a national consensus in post-independence Ukraine was the creation and dissemination of old and new national myths, wrapped especially in the history of heroic and tragic battles for national independence. See Vladimir Kolossov, 'Ethnic and Political Identities and Territorialities in the Post-Soviet Space', paper presented at the International Geographical Union's Commission on the World Political Map conference on Nationalism and Identities in a Globalized World, Maynooth, Ireland, 16–23 August 1998.

33. Jeff Chinn, J., 'Moldovans: Searching for identity', *Problems of Post-Communism* 44 (1997)

pp.43–51 and Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp.43–51.

34. See Chinn; Chinn and Kaiser; and Victor Zaslavsky, 'Nationalism and Democratic Transition in Postcommunist Societies', *Daedalus* 121/2 (1992) pp.97–121.

35. For details of the ethnic mobilisation hypothesis, see Ted R. Gurr and Will H. Moore 'Ethnopolitical rebellion: A cross-sectional analysis of the 1980s with risk assessments for the 1990s', *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (1997), pp.1079–103.

36. See Tom Nairn, *The Breakup of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: New Left Books, 1977).

37. The proportions of the TMR population as of January 1997 are Moldovan, 33.2 per cent; Russian, 29.1 per cent; Ukrainian, 28.9 per cent; Bulgarians, 6.0 per cent; and Others, 6.7 per cent.

38. There are contrasting views of the causes of the war in the TMR. For a view that largely blames elements in Transnistria, see Stuart J. Kaufman, 'Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War', *International Security* 24 (1996), pp.108–13.

39. *Atlas of the Dniester Moldavian Republic* (Tiraspol: Dniester State Corporative T.G. Shevchenko University, 1997), p.2.

40. Ibid. The use of national texts has been a very important element in building a national consensus on identity, history, boundaries and geopolitical goals of new states. For Finland, see Paasi, (notes 20 and 29), and for Ukraine, see Kolossov (note 32).

41. Ibid., p.2

42. William Crowther, 'The Politics of Mobilisation: Nationalism and Reform in Soviet Moldavia', *Russian Review* 50 (1991), pp.183–202; Charles King, 'Eurasia letter: Moldova with a Russian Face', *Foreign Policy* Winter (1995), pp.106–20 and Kaufman (note 38).

43. Kaufman (note 38).

44. Ibid.

45. Albert O.Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970). For details on the central Asia situation, see Chinn and Kaiser (note 33).

46. Paul F. Diehl (ed.), *A Road Map to War: Territorial Dimensions of International Conflict* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998).

47. See Drobizheva et al. (note 26); Kaiser (note 24); Alexi Miller (ed.) *Nationalizm i formirovanie nastii: teorii, modeli, kontseptsi* (Nationalism and the Formation of Nations: Theories, Models, Concepts) (Moscow: Mysl Publisher, 1994) and Vladimir Tishkov, *O nastsiakh i nastionalizme: Svobodnaya mysl* (About nations and nationalism: Free Thinking) Moscow, 3 (1996).

48. The data are taken from A. Zverev, B.Koppiters and D.Trenin (eds.), *Etnicheskie i regionalnye konflikty v Evrazii* (Ethnic and regional conflicts in Eurasia) 3 vols. (Moscow: Ves' Mir, 1997).

49. Kaufman (note 38).

50. Roger Brunet, Denis Eckert, and Vladimir A. Kolossov, *Atlas de la Russie et des Pays Proches* (Montpelier: RECLUS – La Documentation Francaise, 1995) and Vladimir Kolossov, Nikolai V.Petrov and Andrei I.Treivish (1996) 'Obiektivnye i subiektivnye faktory dezintegratsionnykh tendentsii v Rossii: opyt kolichestvennoo otsenki'. (Objective and subjective factors of disintegration tendencies in Russia: The experience of quantitative assessment). In: *Geograficheskie problemy strategii ustoichivogo razvitia okruzhayvshchei sredy i obshchestva*. Moskva: Institut geografii (Russian Academy of Sciences 1996), pp.140–8 (in Russian).

51. King (note 42).

52. Cohen (note 18).

53. See Barry R. Posen, 'The security dilemma and ethnic conflict', *Survival* 35 (1993), pp.27–37 and James Anderson and Ian Shuttleworth, 'Sectarian Demography, Territoriality and Political Development in Northern Ireland', *Political Geography* 17 (1998), pp.187–208.

54. It should be noted here, as well, that following the onslaught of hostilities, ethnic purges and the massive exodus of refugees, the population figures for all four republics are only gross estimates.

55. Cited in Kaufman (note 38), p.132.

56. See Chinn (note 33) and Kaufman (note 38).

57. John O'Loughlin and Vladimir Kolossov, 'National construction, territorial separatism, and post-Soviet geopolitics in the Transdniester Moldovan Republic', *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 39/6 (1998), pp.332–58. .

58. SIPRI. *SIPRI Yearbook 1997: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

59. See O'Loughlin and Kolossov (note 57).

60. The summary of the events surrounding the Transniestrian conflict is drawn predominantly from the accounts in the Central and Eastern European section of the OMRI (Open Media Research Institute) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty daily reports. The difficulty of obtaining reliable and accurate data and reports from the conflict zones is formidable since reports are heavily coloured by the ideologies and perspectives of the observers.

61. See O'Loughlin and Kolossov (note 57).

62. The honesty and the openness of this referendum have been severely questioned by Western observers and commentators; see King (note 42) and Kaufman (note 38), while the legitimacy of the results remain challenged. See also the International Interim Report 'The conflict in the left bank Dniestr areas of the Republic of Moldova by the personal representative of the chairman-in-office of the CSCE Council', *Political Science Review* 14 (1992), pp.161–201 and Kolstoe, Pal and Andrei Ademsky with Natalya Kalashnikova, 'The Dniestr Conflict: Between Irredentism and Separatism', *Europe-Asia Studies* 45 (1993) pp.973–1000.

63. Peter Sahlins *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

64. The weakness of the Transniestrian ruble was evident to us in a visit to Tiraspol in September 1997. An exchange of $300 yielded about 260 million rubles, most in small denominations, and filling a grocery bag. Some bills were *ex post facto* print-marked with three extra zeroes to account for the rapid inflation of the early 1990s.

65. Details of the post-crisis relations between the regional powers and the development of the economic crisis in the TMR can be found in O'Loughlin and Kolossov (note 57).

66. See Chinn (note 33) and Zverev *et al.* (note 48).

67. There is no apparent organised opposition to the TMR leadership, either as an electoral front or as a social movement.