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**The Phenomenon of Unrecognized and Partially Recognized States as a Problem of National, Regional and Global Security: the Main Features of Russian Policy.**

**Introduction.**

Unrecognized states are accepted hazardous because their very emergence and existence create dangerous precedents toward state territorial integrity, they undermine capacity of state to control its spaces, erode sovereignty, overturn fundamental international law principles, lead to conflict aggravation and exacerbate conflict decision making, they could also serve shelter for terrorists and criminals. There are at least six states around Russian borders perceived as unrecognized by the most part of the international society. Moreover, Moscow being a member of the UN Security Council is involved into the settlement processes in Cyprus, Kosovo etc., that is why it also elaborates special position toward state formations in these areas. These facts enable Russian authorities to consider this phenomenon acute and interrogative from a point of Russia's national interests as well as national, regional and global security.

So, the main goal of this paper is to reveal, to compare and to summarize the essence of Russian political approaches toward particular cases of unrecognized states and also to define in global scale whether its stance undergoes transformation or it could be considered as an attitude unique in each special matter when Moscow simultaneously supports independence of South Caucasian Republics and does not recognize Kosovo.

International law does not define necessary prerequisites for generation of new state. The single document is Montevideo Convention of 1933<sup>1</sup>, which marks out as obligatory elements the following: constant population, concrete territory, own government and ability to have relations with other states. But this convention was signed only by American states within Panamerican Union and is not valid de jure for the other international society members. So, there is still no adequate institution and no criteria for recognized states of how to behave towards new states recognition. In each situation they have to elaborate their positions according to their national interests and have to choose which fundamental law principle they must respect more – state territorial integrity or national self-determination right. This kind of dilemma usually emerges when new wannabe state is a result of ethnic conflict. Practically and de-facto, when such a state declares its independence in bilateral matter other international society members usually grant their recognition seamlessly (the cases of South Sudan, Montenegro, etc.). Problems emerge when new state acts unilaterally (Kosovo, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Taiwan etc.). In this case each recognized state have to choose whom to support: central authorities or secessionist part. So, they base their positions upon their own national and geopolitical interests, so far national security is a significant and integral part of them. Mostly, international community members endorse central powers in order to escape separatism in their own territories, to avoid sanctions, not to promote terrorism and extremism. Thus, this leads to emergence of such a phenomenon as unrecognized state, and the institute of recognition bases on precedent but not a set of written rules.

### **Why is Russia engaged?**

There are at least 6 unrecognized states around Russian borders (Transdnistria, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Lougansk People's Republic, Donetsk People's Republic), and this fact enables us to consider this phenomenon acute from a point of Russian national

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<sup>1</sup> Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States. Date enacted: 1933-12-26 // URL: <http://www.cfr.org/sovereignty/montevideo-convention-rights-duties-states/p15897>

interests and security. Also, Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, which bears responsibility for international security. This means that Russia cannot stay abstain from any acute issue of international security discussion due to the process of the Security Council functioning. Finally, Russia has also its internal problems of separatism (Tatarstan, Karelia, Dagestan etc.). Moscow hasn't got any relevant strategy in the sphere of recognition yet, so Russian position is elaborated in each concrete episode. But, such world politics actors as unrecognized states and the very their emergence, existence and activity testify their close connections with international and regional security issues, conflict management and settlement, international law fundamental principles. That is why we believe that there is strong need for Russia of an elaborated strategy based on a robust academic research.

### **Academic approaches to the phenomenon.**

The term unrecognized state can serve us a common denominator and a starting point that will be used generally to learn all the variety of the phenomenon. But to be more neutral and not to focus just on recognition factor we can also call all these formations "factual secessions", that means they illegally (unilaterally) went out of sovereign state control due to various reasons:

- 1) self-determination of ethnically homogenic region (Kosovo, Lougansk People's Republic, Donetsk People's Republic)
- 2) multinational state disintegration/collapse (former Ichkeria-Chechnya, Transdnistria)
- 3) civil war/intervention (Taiwan, Somaliland)
- 4) terrorist/criminal activity (Jubbaland, former Ichkeria-Chechnya)

The hallmark of the most part of unrecognized states definitions in Russian and Western scientific papers is its rendering through a prism of positive and negative sovereignty. Positive sovereignty is ability of state to control its territory and to satisfy needs of its population, and the fact that internal state law operation inside this territory. Negative sovereignty in its turn means recognition,

freedom from external intervention, as well as other states law does not operate on this territory<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, all states from a point of sovereignty type can be divided into two groups:

- 1) having both types of sovereignty (recognized states as the USA, France, Russian Federation etc.)
- 2) having just one type of sovereignty (unrecognized states)

Most of my American colleagues (R. Rotberg<sup>3</sup>, R.D. Lamb<sup>4</sup>, T. Howard<sup>5</sup>, A. Clunen<sup>6</sup>, B.H. Stanislawski<sup>7</sup> etc.) use terms such as “uncontrolled territories”, “quasi states”, “failed states” appealing to central power control loss context. Their main point is that unrecognized states are the same as failed states (equal to hazardous and uncontrolled). The fact that such territories can be successfully controlled de-facto by local self-proclaimed authorities and can be supported by local population is not considered. The fundamental idea is that central authorities loose control over part of state territory. The approach is widely used by the US authorities relating to the American national security.<sup>8</sup> This fact can be easily explained by the very essence of uncontrolled and thus unhealthy and menacing territory.

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<sup>2</sup> Kouznetsov A. «Bitten» Sovereignty: the Problem of the Category // POLITEX. 2006. №3 URL: <http://www.politex.info/content/view/264/30/> (In Russian)

<sup>3</sup> Rotberg R. Failed States in a World of Terror // Foreign Affairs. July-August. 2002 URL: <http://ebookbrowse.com/rotberg-failed-states-in-a-world-of-terror-foreign-affairs-pdf-d46515683>

<sup>4</sup> Lamb R.D. Ungoverned Areas and Threats from Safe Havens. Final Report of the Ungoverned Areas Project Prepared for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. 2008 // URL: <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA479805>

<sup>5</sup> Howard T. The Tragedy of Failure: Evaluating State Failure and Its Impact on the Spread of Refugees, Terrorism, and War. – Santa Barbara. 2010. P.9

<sup>6</sup> Clunen A., Trinkunas H. Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty. – Stanford. 2010. P.3-5

<sup>7</sup> Stanislawsky B.H. Mapping Global Insecurity // The National Strategy Forum Review. 2010. №4. Volume 19 URL: <http://nationalstrategy.com/Portals/0/documents/Fall%202010%20NSFR/B.%20Stanislawski-Black%20Spots.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Stanislawsky B.H. Mapping Global Insecurity // The National Strategy Forum Review. – 2010. - №4, Volume 19 URL: <http://nationalstrategy.com/Portals/0/documents/Fall%202010%20NSFR/B.%20Stanislawski-Black%20Spots.pdf>

Meanwhile, there is also a group of researches whose views are closer to Russian ones. For instance, S. Pegg<sup>9</sup>, N. Caspersen<sup>10</sup>, D. Lynch<sup>11</sup> operate a term “de facto state”, which means separated part of some state, willing to have recognition from international society members, having effective power and supported by local population. N. Popescu uses similar definitions, but calls it “secessionist state” and adds a sufficient feature: existence of external patron, sponsor or protector that makes such a state relatively dependent again (like the EU and NATO for Kosovo, like Russia for South Ossetia).<sup>12</sup> Thus, this group of American and European researches appeal to the problem of a secessionist region self-control. Nevertheless, both mentioned approaches characterize the phenomenon just from one point – the concept of controllability.

Finally, Russian approach is generally elaborated within a context of ability of secessionist state local self-control, its sustainability and international recognition absence. Actually, in Russian academic sphere the term is not much explored. Mostly our researches (historians and political scientists) examine concrete situations (mostly post-Soviet formations and Kosovo) and the problem of territorial integrity and national self-determination principles collision, less frequently the very phenomenon in complex. Let us make a detailed consideration of Russian researches proposals of unrecognized states definitions.

M. Ilyin marks out five grades of recognition:

1) universal (total recognition by all the UN-members)

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<sup>9</sup> Pegg S. The Impact of De Facto States on International Law and the International Community // URL: <http://www.unpo.org/images/professor%20scott%20pegg.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Caspersen N., Stansfield G. Introduction: Unrecognized States in the International System / Unrecognized States in the International System. Ed.by Caspersen N., Stansfield G. – Routledge. 2011. P.2-4

<sup>11</sup> Lynch D. Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States: Unresolved Conflicts and De Facto States. – Washington. 2004. P.14

<sup>12</sup> Popescu N. ‘Outsourcing’ de facto Statehood. Russia and the Secessionist Entities in Georgia and Moldova // URL: <http://www.ceps.eu/book/outsourcing-de-facto-statehood-russia-and-secessionist-entities-georgia-and-moldova>

- 2) practical (UN membership and recognition from some states)
- 3) de facto (formal relations with some states)
- 4) partial (factual relations with some states)
- 5) minimal (support from several states, at least one)<sup>13</sup>

This gradation gives us three types of unrecognized states from a point of recognition (3, 4, 5).

A. Bolshakov outlines two classifications of unrecognized states: by level of self-control and by level of recognition.<sup>14</sup>

The first classification consists of four types:

- 1) unrecognized and having total control over their territory (Transdniestria, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)
- 2) partially controlling their territory (Nagorny Karabakh)
- 3) states under international control (Kosovo)
- 4) quasi states (not having received a right for self-determination and controlling enclaves of compact ethnic groups settlement, like Kurdistan)

The second classification is composed of true unrecognized states (Transdniestria, Nagorny Karabakh) and partially unrecognized states (Palestine, Kosovo). Using the base of the classifications above the researcher defines unrecognized state as a state formation with lack of international personality, but having all other necessary state attributes. He makes an emphasis on Transdniestria, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia naming them unrecognized state

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<sup>13</sup> Iyin M. Alternative Forms of State Sovereignty. Presentation at the Conference “20 Years of Karabakh Movement: Realities and Perspectives”. Stepanakert. May, 22-23th. 2008 // URL: [http://www.igpi.ru/bibl/other\\_articl/1253005141.html](http://www.igpi.ru/bibl/other_articl/1253005141.html) (In Russian)

<sup>14</sup> Bolshakov A. Unrecognized States of European Periphery and Borderzones. // International Trends. 2007. №3 URL: <http://www.intertrends.ru/fifteen/008.htm>. (In Russian)

formations (using it as a special term) that have the full range of sufficient state attributes such as institutes of public authority, mechanisms of its formation (elections), own economy system, taxation system, army, law enforcement, legal system, citizenship etc. Thus, according to A. Bolshakov, these four state formations are the most successful among contemporary unrecognized states, and their only incomplete to be a state is lack of recognition. That is why it is difficult to agree with the American colleagues and to call these state formations really menacing and failed.

An approach of geographers V. Kolosov and N. Mironenko partly reminds the American one. These researchers use a general term “uncontrolled territories” and mark out two types of these formations, but comparing with the American approach they appeal to the “*who* controls from inside” factor:

- 1) quasi states having all state attributes and total elected by local population authorities control (Transdnistria, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)
- 2) unstable territories under local criminals, clans, tribes, druglords control (Somalia)<sup>15</sup>

This “*who* controls from inside” factor estimates state management experience and legitimacy level: the higher they are, the more is credibility of state type organization and possibility to create viable state formation.

N. Milman adheres to the similar academic stance resorting a term “ungoverned territory” and defining it as a special interstate region where official government faces serious hurdles while executing its powers of authority. Such regions can appear both in failed-states (Somalia) and in viable states facing ethnic, political, religious conflicts (Serbia, Moldova).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Kolosov V., Mironenko N. Geopolitics and Political Geography. Moscow. 2002. P.368-370 (In Russian)

<sup>16</sup> Milman N. Ungoverned Territories as a Threat to International Security // POLITEX. 2011. Vol 7. №3 P.114-122 (In Russian)

In his turn, S. Markedonov prefers a term “de-facto state” which means long-living secessionist state formation with foreign and internal political dynamic, playing significant role in world politics. This is state in a full sense of the word, but having lack of recognition<sup>17</sup>. A. Melvil uses the same term to characterize the phenomenon, but by this he implicates the next stage after self-determination principle execution - result of state’s consistency and sustainability rate development<sup>18</sup>.

F. Popov also leans on the factor of sustainability of secessionist state, naming it “quasi state” which means result of disintegrational aspirations for de-jure secession, but gaining just de-facto secession. Long-living, evolved, experienced and internationally active quasi-state becomes de-facto state (like Transdnistria, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)<sup>19</sup>.

N. Dobronravin addresses to a term “unrecognized/partially recognized state” having in mind that these are political entities claiming for sovereign status, having certain amount of international activity (paradiplomacy, quasi formal diplomacy etc.), unrecognized/partially recognized by the UN members. Having supervisor status in the UN means stability of entity (Palestine). The researcher divides this entities into two groups: true unrecognized states and partially recognized state (having at least one recognition, for instance, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, South Ossetia). To distinguish recognized states from unrecognized we can take into account rapidity of recognition and the UN affiliation (South Sudan, Montenegro). Recognition by metropolis is of particular importance for state to become recognized (this means that secession is bilateral)<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Markedonov S. De Facto States 2006-11-14 // URL: <http://www.apn.ru/publications/article10896.htm> (In Russian)

<sup>18</sup> Ilyin M., Meleshkina E., Melvil A. Formation of New States: Inner and External Factors of Consolidation // POLIS. 2010. №3. P.36-38 (In Russian)

<sup>19</sup> Popov F. From “Territory without State” to “De Facto State” // International Trends. 2011. №2 URL: <http://www.intertrends.ru/twenty-sixth/003.htm> (In Russian)

<sup>20</sup> Dobronravin N. Unrecognized States in the Shadow Zone of the World Politics: Basics of Survavil and Principles of Sovereignization. Saint-Petersburg. 2011 (In Russian)

Y. Solozobov prefers a term “partisan republic” concentrating on the effectiveness and self-sufficiency of secessionist state entity, asserting that it is much more successful in statehood and economic system than its metropolis. The researcher uses this term specially for post-Soviet space secessionist states (Transdnistria etc.)<sup>21</sup>.

Finally, S. Tkachenko refers to “state with limited recognition” with absolute internal sovereignty<sup>22</sup>. This term seems to us the most relevant because it integrates unrecognized and partially recognized states and underlines that the only problem of this formations statehood is recognition from the international society (as we refer to them further). We will also use a term “de facto state” as a synonym.

Therefore, the definition that we will appeal to further is the following: states with limited recognition or de-facto states are political formations claiming for sovereign state status, having certain amount of international activity, unrecognized or partially recognized by the UN members, having relatively effective governance system and absolutely or almost completely controlling their territories. They are: Transdnistria, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Palestine, Kosovo Republic, Taiwan, Western Sahara etc.). Concerning formations as Lougansk People’s Republic and Donetsk People’s Republic it is needed to say that period of their existence is too short to subsume them to the group of stable political entities with limited recognition, but nevertheless, both of them undergo strong political alterations on the way of factual secession.

Moreover, there is a need to underline once again that Russian approaches to characterization of factual secession formations are widely based on three crucial factors (self-control, sustainability, recognition), whilst our Western colleagues mostly rely just upon the factor of controllability of

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<sup>21</sup> Solozobov Y. Russia Unrecognized // Literatournaya Gazeta. URL: [http://www.lgz.ru/archives/html\\_arch/Ig142006/Polosy/2\\_1.htm](http://www.lgz.ru/archives/html_arch/Ig142006/Polosy/2_1.htm) (In Russian)

<sup>22</sup> Tkachenko S. The TRNC and the Other States with Limited Recognition: Comparative Analysis / Isolated Part of Cyprus. Ed. by S.Tkachenko & M.Özsağlam. – St.-Petersburg. 2011. P.37

secessionist state without emphasizing any distinctions between successful formations having all needed state features and controlling its territory, but having lack of recognition (such as South Ossetia), and criminal uncontrolled republics (such as Puntland in Somalia). Inconsiderable in number, but very interesting and sufficient researches in the sphere of secessionist formations in future can be extended and applied by Russian authorities in foreign policy elaboration and execution.

### **Why are factual secessions considered severe?**

Proceed from the premise that all present factual secessions from uncontrolled territories to states with limited recognition are not de facto subjected to international and domestic (central or unrecognized local) law norms, they all potentially pose threat to international, regional and local security, albeit in varying degrees.

First of all, there is a need to define the source of menaces deriving from factual secessions. A. Rabasa proposes four indicators of ungovernability:

- 1) level of governmental penetration into society, which is defined with availability and effectiveness of main state institutions like social security, public health service, law enforcement bodies, court system etc. In case these institutions are ineffective or invalid they transit under tribal leaders, criminal groups or partisan divisions control.
- 2) level of governmental monopoly over use of force, which is estimated by state coercion effectiveness at concrete territories
- 3) level of governmental border control, as the most of secessionist formations are located in cross-border regions
- 4) level of external interference of other states<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Rabasa A. Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks. RAND Corporation. 2007. P. 7-13

Thus, the lower these indicators of central authorities are, the higher opportunity of ungoverned territories emergence is and the less control and threat reduction is possible. In spite of the fact that A. Rabasa marked out these factors concerning central authorities, it is also admissible to use them inversely relating to local authorities ability to self-control as de-facto state. Therefore, the higher these indicators of local authorities are, the more stable and the less hazardous formation is. This relation seems more correct and relevant than the original one, which does not consider the sustainability of de-facto state in case of low indicators of the metropolis. For instance, in relations between Somalia and Jubbaland both of them weakly and ineffectively control the territory of the latter rebellious territory and, therefore, it constitute danger locally, regionally and internationally, whilst in relations Moldova-Transdnistria the indicators of the former in the latter are low, but the indicators of the latter in itself are quite high and Transdnistria de facto poses relatively low level of threat to international and regional security.

The key threats stemming from secessionist states are terrorism, economic crimes and criminal activity in general, piracy, human rights violation, international law principles demolition.

1. Factual secession is a potential shelter for terrorists. Terrorist activity can derive both from local fighters for independence, ethnic rights etc. and external groupings gaining compassion and shelter from local population. For example, ethnic nationalism has been producing ground for terroristic activity historically (let us recollect the Kosovo-Serbian “Tigers of Arcan”, the Greek-Cypriot “EOKA”, the Kosovo-Albanian “Kosovo Liberation Army”, the Turk-Cypriot “Turkish Resistance Organization” etc.).

Also being a potential source of terrorism does not exclude the possibility of ties with external terrorist organizations providing solidarity, finance, weapons, etc. (Basque ETA and Al-Qaeda, Chechen terrorist groupings and Al-Qaeda). There are also numerous examples of ties between secessionist states and terrorist. Among them are the following examples. There is a

reliable fact (once officially proved by a former president of Kosovo I. Rougova) that Al-Qaeda members were training at Kosovo territory in the mid 2000s. Regarding Cyprus according to some sources (but not proved officially) it is also known that commercial banks at the territory of the Northern Cyprus are used as one of the funding sources for Chechen terrorist groups as these banks are not controlled internationally. Even a little likelihood of being connected with terroristic activity is not groundless due to the fact of not falling under international law force.

Moreover, when central or local self-proclaimed authorities are inert or back-strapped to help population in some critical situations terrorist groups might abuse it and produce assistance in return of future compassion, favor and even direct involvement (for instance, Islamist grouping “Lashkar-e-Taiba” deployed humanitarian activity in Kashmere after an earthquake in 2005).

Experts of the RAND Corporation marked out four indicators of conduciveness to terrorist presence in secessionist formations<sup>24</sup>:

- 1) availability of infrastructure needed for terrorist activity with unattended access (cohesion, transportation, uncontrolled financial flow etc.)
  - 2) source of income availability
  - 3) ability of observation escape, which is easy when territory falls out of national or at least international legal frameworks
  - 4) conducive demographic and social properties of local population (like tribal rulebook or traditions of hospitality and non-extradition of guest to his enemy)
2. Concerning criminal activity factual secessions can also serve shelters for criminals, as well as the very kidnappers, drug-dealers and human-traffickers might be organizers and leaders of

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<sup>24</sup> Rabasa A. Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks. RAND Corporation. 2007. P. 7-13

secessionist territories (as it happens in Bolivia, Venezuela, Columbia etc.). Moreover, criminal activity might be an income source for self-proclaimed authorities. For example, militants in Novorossia encountering lack of finance resort to protection racket.

Also, local population might regard economic crime as income source when economy system does not provide employment. An example of Kosovo in this case is very vivid. This area is in the center of the so-called “golden crescent” connecting Afghanistan and Pakistan with the European drug market. Its village Veliky-Tyrnovac is one of the biggest drug-dealing centers in Europe. It is well known that drug trade is closely connected with criminal and terroristic organizations.

Tax evasion, money laundering and usage of bank services staying beyond international law operation are also the side effects of factual secessions, where shadow economy residents can conduct their activity.

3. Piracy occurs in secessionist states as a result of failed economy and unemployment and as a result of state border guards inactivity and ineffectiveness. Pirates take their functions upon themselves and usually rely on self-proclaimed authorities support (the leaders of Puntland provide back-up to Somalian pirates)

4. No one can ensure respect for human rights in factual secessions, and humanitarian organizations activity is carried out in constantly risky environment. Moreover, counter-terrorism and punitive operations for state control restoration or local authorities power consolidation lead to mass deaths of civilians and humanitarian catastrophes.

Secessionist territories are also hazardous with ethnic and confessional discrimination concerning minorities (for instance, Kosovan Serbs rights ignorance and violation by Kosovar authorities), that can further lead to acts of provocation and violence, as well as missing people, human-trafficking, human organs trafficking and even genocide due to low level of personal

protection. Rights of minorities violation appears also in cases of unilateral declaration of independence without taking their interests into consideration, as it happened in Kosovo in 2008.

5. Secessionist states emergence is a serious challenge to international law. It is well known that international law has inner contradictions such as collision between territorial integrity and self-determination right principles, and unilateral declaration of independence cases violate unstable as it is balance between these two principles giving by the way precedents and being trigger for other separatist regions.

Contemporary international law becomes more fragile as the world changes rapidly and the existing rules do not satisfy the environment anymore, revealing more and more spots and gaps within the system like lack of special institution and criteria of recognition.

### **Russian Position and Policy towards Factual Secessions.**

First of all let us outline two de-facto approaches to secessionist states practically applied by contemporary members of international society:

- 1) international law approach (non-recognition and denial of the very existence of secessionist formation, like China's attitude to Taiwan, and the opposite situation of de-jure and de-facto recognition, like in case Russia-South Ossetia)
- 2) geopolitical approach (non-recognition, but de-facto admittance of factual secession existence and activity, even informal contact are brought about, like the case of the USA and Taiwan)

Within the context of Russian foreign politics we can provisionally divide all contemporary secessionist formations into two groups according to priority ranking:

- 1) group of particular importance

2) group of common importance.

The first group is made up of secessionist formations at the post-Soviet area (Transdniestria, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Lougansk People's Republic, Donetsk People's Republic) and Kosovo. This group membership is explained by the fact that the post-Soviet space plays a key role in system of Russian national interests. In its turn, Kosovo involvement is dictated by special geopolitical significance of the Balkan region and traditions of "fraternal" relations with Serbia. These factual secessions are constantly in focus of Russian policy, their problems are often discussed on various levels, their de facto existence is reflected in official documents and they influence Russian political line. Four of them (Transdniestria, Nagorny Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia) do not pose Russia any sufficient threat (excepting possibility of metropolis to force usage for the purpose of returning control) because they are states with limited recognition.

The second group includes all the other contemporary factual secessions like Palestine, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus etc. Presence of these secessionist states and formations influences Russian policy making in a less degree, than the first group states, that are geographically closer.

Each secessionist state incites external actors elaborate positions towards its status (recognition or non-recognition) and its problems of isolation, human rights, conflictogenity, international security threats. Russia formally recognizes just two of all contemporary factual secession – South Ossetia and Abkhazia<sup>25</sup>, towards status of the others it keeps to a tough stance of non-recognition. A detailed content-analysis of Russian foreign policy formal documents and politicians statements reveals a wide range of appellations concerning secessionist formations

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<sup>25</sup> Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 2013 // URL: <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/0f474e63a426b7c344257b2e003c945f!OpenDocument>

such as: “unilaterally declared state”, “quasi-independent state”, “so-called state” (Republic of Kosovo); “illegally declared state” (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus); “self-proclaimed state” (Lugansk People’s Republic, Donetsk People’s Republic) etc. These given characteristics testify and reflect the fact that Russia strictly keeps to the position of territorial integrity principle respect.

On the other hand, Russian authorities and official representatives statements demonstrate wide variety of “terms” for Kosovo and quiet a meager set of them for the others (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Transdnestrria, Nagorny Karabakh, Palestine etc.) This fact indicates specific compelling stand towards Kosovo Republic. It can be explained with the Kosovo issue in general. Assisting Kosovo in its unilateral declaration of independence the USA and their allies relied on Kosovo so-called “unique case”: the context of Yugoslavia’s breakup, the history of ethnic cleansing and crimes against civilians in Kosovo, and the extended period of UN administration not found elsewhere. This kind of “sensation” around Kosovo emerged partially due to still continuing competition between the USA and Russia in geopolitically and strategically significant region of Balkans, and it is supplied by permanent Russian traditions of support of Serbs. Thus, even if Kosovo case is not unique in the context of independence declaration according to Russian stand, it is de-facto unique in the context of its influence on Russian foreign policy elaboration, because this issue is complicated with special geopolitical competition and clash of national interests.

The second special issue in Russian policy towards factual secessions is the case of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Most of my Russian colleagues argue that their recognition by Moscow was an appropriate challenge to the Western diplomacy concerning Kosovo unilateral independence declaration<sup>26</sup>. Among other subjective reasons is also an effort to demonstrate

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<sup>26</sup> Kandel P. Kosovo Precedent and Post Soviet Conflicts // *Actualniye Problemy Evropy*. 2009. №3. P.22 (In Russian)

Russia's ability to be a global player and sufficiently affect world order, as well as justifiability of the two nations to use the right of self-determination in consequence of Georgian central authorities initiated punitive operation towards Ossetia (aggression). On the other hand, Russia itself might be accused of double standards when it rebukes the USA in double standards with Kosovo at the same time using this case as a precedent for South Caucasian republics recognition.

Thus, there is the first Russian policy peculiarity towards factual secessions: special positions concerning Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The second peculiarity is reflection of post-Soviet special significance in Russian policy. As it is noted in "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation"<sup>27</sup> cooperation with the members of Community of Independent States is the main regional priority for Moscow. Therefore, post-Soviet space surrounding Russian borders is a sphere of Russian national interests and security. In other words, post-Soviet space plays a core role in Russian foreign policy. Understanding problems of the states with limited recognition and paying special attention to the severe period of Novorossia state building Russia is also trying to keep balance in its relations with post-Soviet states. On the one hand, it can strengthen its influence by means of post-Soviet secessionist states tending to Russia (Transdnistria, Novorossia etc.). On the other hand, it needs to keep its partners and regional strategic influence as well, that is why it undertakes efforts to behave very carefully. And this is the third peculiarity.

Carefulness and relative restraint regarding states with limited recognition is an evidence of formally declared consistent and successive Russian foreign policy in general. This circumstance is explained by the following reasons:

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<sup>27</sup> Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 2013 // URL: <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/0f474e63a426b7c344257b2e003c945f!OpenDocument>

- 1) fragility of the CIS, that can be destroyed by any incautious political step
- 2) special significance of bilateral relations with Azerbaidjan, Moldova, Turkey etc., that can be also spoiled in case of wrong measures or statements
- 3) unwillingness to complicate relations with the West
- 4) potential sources of separatism in Russian territory might intensify
- 5) Russia still stays an advocate of international law and considers any revisions and situational versions of it inadmittable

As we see Russia keeps to consistency in foreign policy towards factual secessions, but now we know almost three exclusions: South Ossetia, Abkhazia and the Crimea case.

The forth peculiarity is keeping balance between position of non-recognition and efforts to encourage international society to assist population of secessionist formations who face economic isolation, human rights violation etc. Also Russia invokes to take into account interests of local population obligatory while making any decisions on settlement and inadmittability of any unilateral measures (like it states in cases of Northern Cyprus and Kosovo Serbs).

Summing up all these peculiarities it is possible to assert that Russia mostly keeps to geopolitical approach towards factual secessions rather international law approach, but in case of Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkhazia it resorts to international law approach.

#### **Future strategies and conclusion.**

There are three scenarios of further Russian policy towards factual secessions.

The first “radical” scenario predicts recognition/annexation of Transdnistria, Novorossia and South Ossetia, Abkhazia. This measure will absolutely gain strong support from Russian population (like it happened with the Crimea), cause another wave of imperialistic mentality

and accusations, and on the other hand, it won't obtain any support from the international society and provoke wave of separatism in the world. Also, Russia will absolutely lose approval from China having secessionist formations as Taiwan and Tibet.

The second scenario implies strategy of territorial integrity preservation. This means strict adherence to Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and Russia's consolidation in conflict zone settlement. Such a position would coincide with Russian approach to Kosovo case, but come to a dead-end finally, because federalization drafts are not popular among secessionist formations, and it is nearly impossible to find any compromise between conflict parties in most cases.

The third scenario suggests to seek individual approach to each issue. It is not obvious, but correlates contemporary realities mostly with the examples of South Caucasian republics and Crimean annexation, because they fall out of the Russian general policy line, as we mentioned before. For instance, in case of Transdniestria Moscow should continue to ensure territorial integrity of Moldova, thus, preserving its neutral and non-aligned status in the sphere of Russian national interests and security. According to this scenario recognition of South Caucasian republics was premature and weakened Russian positions in Caucasus, as Georgia and Azerbaijan conduct consistent policy of NATO affiliation in future.

Therefore, Russian policy of consideration each factual secession should continue being individual. This approach is more fruitful, consistent, deliberate and will ensure more profitable conditions in the context of cooperation and security. Moreover, Russia has gathered serious experience in curbing uncontrolled secessionist formations in its own territory (Chechnya, Dagestan etc.)

Secondly, cases of South Caucasian Republics can hardly be considered a defining moment that could sufficiently modify or testify the beginning of Russian policy towards secessionist states transformation, as practice demonstrates consistency and relatively individual approach

in each matter. Each secessionist conflict is unique due to its ethnic, political, historical and other characteristics and each case correspond concrete national interests. Moreover, there is no obvious transformation because Russia recognizes just South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but not Transdniestria, Nagorny Karabakh, Lougansk or Donetsk People’s Republic, and still advocates fundamental principles of territorial integrity border inviolability.

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