

NON-RECOGNIZED STATES, SECURITY THREATS AND POST CONFLICT 'STATENESS': THE QUARTET OF POST-SOVIET SPACE¹

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1. Introduction

The establishment of a state is the central goal of each nation as it is seen as the main mechanism for providing safety, prosperity and development. But is everything that smooth in real life? The experience of both countries established in the second half of the 20th century and prior, shows that the establishment of the state does not automatically lead to security, prosperity and to ensuring development. Moreover, current situations and development tracks strictly differ across states, which makes it even more difficult to improve the complex and at the same time fragile systems of states and their ‘stateness’ levels.

The societies of these countries faced unprecedented challenges along the way of formation of statehood and ‘stateness’, as neither experience, nor knowledge of previous decades was applicable. At the same time they were compelled to cope with another not less complicated transformational process: globalization. But the problem is even more complicated for the group of those countries, which haven’t been recognized yet, as there exist additional difficulties for ‘stateness’, particularly, conditioned by challenges and consequences of phases of conflict, stringent limitation of international relations and its consequences, lack of experience and knowledge of how to build a sovereign state, etc. This bucket of problems is a prolific base for state fragility and failure – as a result imposing a great threat to domestic and regional stability and security, and hence requires precise study.

Yet another cumbersome issue is the fact that the highest rate of ethno-national claims was registered in the first half of the 1990s and that many of them still exist today. However, the problem is, of course, not only driven by numerical data, but also has fundamental reasons: as we can assume that the development trends of modern geopolitical systems objectively contribute to the emergence of new states, but that not

much is done to ensure the development of those entities – hence prolonging the sufferings of people living in those regions and nearby.

The solution of the afore-named problems requires a set of comprehensive actions. The first step should be the presentation of an integral model of assessment of ‘stateness’. Using this model, the so-called ‘Peace Index’, this paper will also comprehensively assess the levels of ‘stateness’ of four non-recognized states of Post-Soviet space: Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria across all four fields of ‘stateness’ – political, economic, social and security. It is noteworthy, that all the existing indexes – both integral and segregated field assessments (with the exception of the ‘Freedom in the World’ index) do not cover the assessment of non-recognized states. Hence, the ‘Peace Index’ is a new integral assessment index, which not only gives an opportunity for the comprehensive assessment of non-recognized states, but also to assess them alongside the recognized ones. In the following section, this special approach, its methodology and its objectives will be discussed in more detail.

2. ‘Stateness’ Assessment of Non-Recognized States: the ‘Peace Index’

We have developed an integral model for the assessment of ‘stateness’, which remains at present the main evaluative and analytical tool of ‘stateness’ available. ‘Stateness’ is defined as the state’s capacity of performing its main functions, of becoming a full member of the international community of being a subject of international law. This definition has been derived by a comprehensive study of the factors ensuring the processes of state-building and ‘stateness’¹. That same study led to the idea, that statehood/legal personality

1 Violetta Petrosyan, From Conflict to Peace: The Features of Post-Conflict State-Building, *Armenian Journal of Political Science* 1-4 (2016): 15-44. /Author changed her surname from Petrosyan to Manukyan in 2018/.

is a constituent part, particularly, in fact, the very basis and driving force of ensuring state development and sustainability². The lack of it inevitably leads to a number of problems for 'stateness', as will be shown in later examples of the reviewed non-recognized states.

So, one can argue that generally speaking, a non-recognized status poses a real challenge for a state. At the same time, this is not always true: a number of states - both recognized quite a long time ago and recently - are currently in a much worse situation than some non-recognized states, even though they enjoy the privileges of being recognized and do not have to face the challenges that come with non-recognition. Hence, although statehood/legal personality is a must and a basis for the efficiency of state-building and 'stateness' processes, the existence of it does not automatically ensure development and sustainability.

This is the reason why the index aims to represent an integral model of assessment of 'stateness', which will be applicable both for recognized and non-recognized states. Integral assessment of 'stateness' allows to record simultaneously both progress and regress in all the fields of 'stateness' hence giving an opportunity to the states and international community to focus on the problem areas and to promptly undertake their solution process. Such approach would allow fighting against security threats and destabilization, thereby fostering peace and security, which conditioned the name of the index - 'Peace Index'.

The 'Peace Index' represents a new approach: for fulfilling the outlined aim, it attempts to solve the following problems:

- While composing the model, include all the basic features conditioning and underpinning the processes of state-

building and 'stateness', with the emphasis on the comprehensive study of the 'stateness' levels of both recognized and non-recognized states, without separating them or giving any type of a privilege to any of them.

- Select as sub-indexes the features conditioning 'stateness' and collocate them within the outlined indexes representing all the fields of 'stateness': political, economic, social and security. Each of them, in its turn, is represented through sub-indexes, which thoroughly render the outlined sphere and of course all the necessary prerequisites conditioning the effective determination and assessment of 'stateness' level. To avoid problems with the equivalence of assessment criteria for all the states and assessment objectivity, it is necessary to ensure the universality, i.e. applicability of each sub-index to all the states.
- The majority of the existing indexes do not represent the content part of assessment of 'stateness' level of each country. Instead, they are publishing only numerical scores in front of each sub-index and of course their sum - the final score rating of each state. In this case, it's impossible to get information about the results of the carried assessment, to assess their objectiveness and validity, as well as to apply them to our own research. In order to avoid these problems, all the results obtained in the scope of 'Peace Index' will be represented by the sub-indexes in very detailed reports.
- Draw special attention to security sphere. As a rule, in integral models security sector is not represented as a separate sphere. Instead, they represent security indicators within political index - only with one or maximum two irrelevantly included sub-indexes. But taking into account the fact, that the index would also assess the 'stateness' level of non-recognized states, which in post-conflict phase in terms of absence or underdevelopment of international and local control mechanisms

2 Violetta Petrosyan, Stateness and its Connection to International Recognition: The Case of States Emerged on the Right of Peoples to Self-Determination, *Armenian Journal of Political Science* 1-8 (2018): 75-102. /Author changed her surname from Petrosyan to Manukyan in 2018/.

over the state become truthfully prolific ground for the emergence and development of illegal groups and activities, the factors conditioning security long for peculiar attention. Moreover, given the current threats to international security and peace, non-stable entities (no matter recognized or non-recognized states), the study of security sector should be raised to a new level.

3. Non-Recognized Status and Stability? The Features and Challenges of Post-Conflict 'stateness' of the Quartet of Post-Soviet Space

As already mentioned before, the assessment of levels of 'stateness' is a rather difficult process in itself. But a non-recognized status brings a bunch of new peculiar problems, which need specific focus and comprehensive study. If neglected, these types of problems tend to flow into greater ones for the non-recognized states themselves and afterwards for the regional security.

Using our comprehensive view of 'stateness' within the afore-presented index of integral assessment, this paper reviews the 'stateness' level through all four fields of 'stateness': political, economic, social and security, thus highlighting the main features that are especially vital for the achievement of international recognition; and given its absence in our cases, also outlining the threats that can arise because of post-conflict features and non-recognized status. In the following, we will discuss the most significant problems we detected in each of these fields for the reviewed non-recognized states: Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria, as well as calculate the 'Peace Index' scores for each state.

Political field: State legitimacy and government effectiveness are the two political factors connected to international recognition that are of notional importance. The most fragile points in all non-recognized states

are indeed the issues of good governance and government effectiveness. As a rule, the governments of these entities find themselves incapable and/or reluctant to work on that issue. No doubt, the most difficult are the cases when dealing with non-willingness, as the cases of incapability or lack of knowledge/experience can be easily addressed should the international community be willing to assist. Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria are characterized by rather bad governance – permanently facing problems like inability to fulfil their basic functions and to provide public goods and services, poor administrative coordination, a high rate of corruption, etc. At the same time, governments' activities are limited by the influence of Moscow, which funds the significant portion of the budget of these states. In these circumstances the representatives of the political elite of these states are not trying to undertake any amendments and reforms to handle the situation, but are rather fighting with one another for stepping into position and gaining the best possible profit from it. Nagorno-Karabakh, on the other hand, is registering outstanding results in democratic good governance – having established effectively functioning state institutions and civil organizations. However, the established good results and further development are constantly at risk because of the tension across the borderline, as the resumption of large-scale armed conflict would not only stop the development, but also collapse the good results in effective governance, that have been registered during the decades of existence of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR).

In the states, where the state institutions have not been fully established, the non-state actors – e.g. warlords, rebels and criminal networks – can take the advantage of lack of state capacity and legitimacy, and offer alternative governance systems. Therefore, the issue of legitimacy is very complex in fragile post-conflict entities - with different sources of legitimacy coexisting, competing and conflicting – and interacting with other sources of power

and interest. This further complicates external actors' effective intervention during the post-conflict period³. After armed conflict, very often power is focused in the hands of the actors, who, in their turn, control the armed groups⁴, unless the Constitution and relevant laws have been adopted and the elections have been held on their basis. Hence, in the first phase the key actors are the warlords, whose role in the second phase should gradually decrease, of course, if the process is moving in the right direction. But there are examples, when the warlords are not very eager to relinquish from the attained power and fight for it through all the possible means, e.g. in Nagorno-Karabakh Republic the Self-Defence Forces Commander Samvel Babayan launched an assassination attempt on then President Arkadi Ghukasyan, which the president survived. Babayan got sentenced to 14 years in prison⁵. This was the last chord of post-conflict features' influence on governing process: afterwards the NKR was able to fully 'clean up' and rehabilitate the governance system – showing spectacular results in good governance.

All in all, the issue of legitimacy is, indeed, a very vulnerable point for all these kinds of states, as neither their sovereignty, nor their elections are perceived as legitimate by the international community. In Abkhazia, a problem of legitimacy emerged not only with the elections or sovereignty, but with the process of declaration of independence itself: the referendum for independence was held after the majority of the population of the

region was set to ethnic cleansing and about 250.000 ethnic Georgians were made to leave the region⁶.

Economic field: For each state economic factors are undoubtedly of high significance, especially the issues of trade and investments. But the non-recognized states are, in fact, facing almost an absence of the afore-named relations, particularly conditioned by stringent limitation of any type of international relations, including economic ones. But if we take into account, that these states in this cumbersome plight should develop their economy while also being faced with a pack of severe challenges: the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the whole country after the military phase, the worldwide deepening of the globalization process, the process of extensive and intensive armament in the context of still 'a frozen conflict' and, in the case of the countries of Post-Soviet space, the process of Post-Soviet transformation; the international community is, in fact, directly putting these states under the threat of becoming fragile and even fail. This pack of challenges would be too much even for a recognized state – with its already firmly established international relations, what to say about the ones lacking them?

The major problem, that all the four non-recognized states of Post-Soviet space share, is the non-ability to ensure their own state budget. The state budgets of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria to a large extent rely on the financial aid from Russia. Abkhazia's economy comprises of agricultural products (tea, tobacco, wine and fruits), tourism (again financed by investments from Russian businessmen) and financial aid from Russia

3 Roland Paris, ed. Timothy D. Sisk, ed., *The Contradictions of State Building: Confronting the Con of Post-War Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2008).

4 Jack Goldstone, *Pathways to State Failure*, *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25-4 (2008): 285-296.

5 See Armen Grigoryan A., *Armenian Authorities Arrest Former Separatist Karabakh "Defense Minister" on Eve of Parliamentary Elections*, *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 14 Issue: 45, accessed February 27, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/armenian-authorities-arrest-former-separatist-karabakh-defense-minister-eve-parliamentary-elections/>.

6 *Freedom in the World 2009: Abkhazia*, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2009/abkhazia;> *Ethnic Cleansing on Georgians Resulted from Russian Invasion and Occupation since August 8, 2008*, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/34091?download=true>.

making up more than half of the budget⁷. Russia's aid comprises almost of the entirety of the budget of South Ossetia⁸: the region was once rich with factories, but the few factories, that function nowadays, are in need of repair, have debts and scarce workplaces – leaving many people once working there jobless. As Georgia has cut off the supply of electricity, they had to run an electric cable through South Ossetia, thus further enhancing their dependency on Russia. The electricity, however, is not yet supplied to all the parts of the state. Transnistria's economy is mainly comprised of heavy industry (steel production), electricity and manufacturing (textile production)⁹. After Moldova signed the Association Agreement with the EU in 2014, Transnistria - de-jure part of Moldova, enjoyed tariff-free exports to the EU, which resulted in a decline of export to Russia by 7.7% and a rise of export to the EU by 27% in 2015¹⁰. It may seem that this would have resulted in the recession of Russia's influence, but Russia still has a major stake in the Transnistrian economy through direct subsidies, loans and natural gas supplies. The bright manifestation is the fact, that because of an economic downturn in Russia and subsequent lesser financial support coming

from it, the Transnistrian government found itself incapable to fully pay the pensions and salaries in 2016¹¹. Along with these problems Transnistria, until recently, had to face another one too: the debt of about 5.8 billion dollars to Russian energy supplier Gazprom. But in an attempt to conquer Transnistria's heart back and at the same time 'punish' Moldova for its pro-Western/pro-EU inclination, Russia has named Moldova to be the borrower, hence the one to pay back the debt instead of Transnistria¹². However, this hasn't solved Transnistria's problems, and the latter had to ask Russia for a long-term loan of \$130 million for its budget and fiscal reforms¹³.

Despite the registered good results in political and social fields, Nagorno-Karabakh still faces issues within the economic field, as it is yet not able to compile its state budget and relies on Armenia's aid. The economy is still small, but it is noteworthy, that it is rapidly growing¹⁴. The economic activity is mainly comprised of mining (gold, copper),

- 7 Abkhazia-Russia's Tight Embrace, accessed February 28, 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/essay_abkhazia_russias_tight_embrace; Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Time to Talk Trade, Crisis Group Europe Report N°249, 24 May 2018, accessed February 28, 2018, [https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/249-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia-time-to-talk-trade%20\(1\).pdf](https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/249-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia-time-to-talk-trade%20(1).pdf); Russia Increases Financial Aid to Abkhazia, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30180>.
- 8 Freedom in the World 2017: South Ossetia, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/south-ossetia>.
- 9 An aided economy. The characteristics of the Transnistrian economic model, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2013-05-16/aided-economy-characteristics-transnistrian-economic-model>.
- 10 Moldova: Separatist Transnistria Region Reorienting Trade from Russia to EU, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://eurasianet.org/node/78636>.

- 11 Freedom in the World 2016: Transnistria, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/transnistria>.
- 12 Russian gas for Moldova: Who will pay the debts?, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2017/02/13/russian-gas-for-moldova-who-will-pay-the-debts>; Gazprom rejected Moldova's proposal to separate its gas debt from that of Transnistria, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.moldova.org/en/gazprom-rejected-moldovas-proposal-separate-gas-debt-transnistria/>; Russia uses Transnistrian gas debt as political weapon against Moldova, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.moldova.org/en/russia-uses-transnistrian-gas-debt-as-political-weapon-against-moldovainterview-238043-eng/>.
- 13 Transnistria asks Russia for a long-term loan of \$130 million for "budget and fiscal reforms", accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.moldova.org/en/transnistria-asks-russia-long-term-loan-130-million-budget-fiscal-reforms/>; Russia Pledges More Financial Aid to Transnistria, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/russia-to-give-financial-aid-to-transnistria-01-22-2018>.
- 14 Artsakh state budget revenues exceed by 5.6% in first quarter 2018, accessed April 14, 2018, <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2018/04/12/Artsakh-state-budget-revenues/1932570>.

manufacturing industries, agriculture, construction, jewellery and diamond polishing. The government is trying to address the issue with a number of economic rehabilitation projects.

Social field: Overall, without ensuring public security, the economy and public services simply cannot work and peace cannot be obtained. Apparent examples are Somalia and Afghanistan. But the difficulties of the limited public representation and capacities in fragile post-conflict states facilitate the process of focusing the provision of key activities and services in the hands of some non-state actors – including international and local non-governmental organizations, inherited power holders and in some cases criminal or armed groups, who are challenging and competing with the elected authorities¹⁵. But the elected authorities also do not restrain from taking the advantages of misusing the public goods for the sake of their own interests. The aforementioned is not acceptable, as a state should be able to protect itself from both internal and external threats, while simultaneously being obliged to protect the population – regardless of ethnicity¹⁶.

However, Abkhazia and South Ossetia fail to fulfil their basic functions and to provide public goods and services. In fact, they are not taking any steps towards meeting the society's expectations. The workplaces in Abkhazia are few in number and to greater extent are related to the sphere of tourism and services. The salaries are low, the workplaces and opportunities are scarce, while corruption remains extensive. Government officials are

not even required to provide declarations of income¹⁷. But the issues with workplaces are even more complicated in South Ossetia, which is characterized by a very high rate of unemployment: a region once rich with factories, industrial units and the many workplaces they offered is nowadays facing an almost total lack of them and leaves the majority of the population to live on subsistence farming. The afore-mentioned situation drives frequent protests against the high rate of poverty and unemployment, for which the population blames the government and its economic and budgetary mismanagement, corruption, poor administrative coordination, slow post-war reconstruction and related embezzling of international aid¹⁸, to date there are no efforts to address the issue of the lack of industry and, what is of exceptional importance, the problem of ceding too much control to Moscow¹⁹. At the same time protests are held on nationalist incentives as well: one of the major protests was held in 2014 in Sukhumi, Abkhazia with 10.000 supporters of Abkhaz opposition storming the office of then president Aleksandr Ankvab and ultimately making him resign²⁰. The mass demonstration was attributed to the public anger raised by a treaty signed with Russia, which was giving broader economic and military power to Russia, the lack of economic reforms and Ankvab's liberal policy towards ethnic Georgians, mainly his decision of granting Abkhaz citizenship and passports to

15 Richard Batley, Claire Mcloughlin, Engagement with Non-State Service Providers in Fragile States: Reconciling State-Building and Service Delivery, Development Policy Review 28-2 (2010): 131-154.

16 Timothy Sisk, Vanessa Wyeth, Rethinking Peace-Building and State-Building in War-Torn Countries: Conceptual Clarity, Policy Guidance, and Practical Implications, Draft discussion note for the OECD DAC International Network on Conflict and Fragility, 2009.

17 Freedom in the World 2016: Abkhazia, accessed March 11, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/abkhazia>.

18 Particularly Russia allocated 2.8 billion rubles in 2009 for rebuilding and restoring infrastructure, social amenities and utilities destroyed or damaged during the 2008 war.

19 Freedom in the World 2016: South Ossetia, accessed March 11, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/south-ossetia>.

20 President of Georgian Abkhazia Resigns Under Pressure, accessed March 11, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/02/world/europe/president-resigns-in-georgias-breakaway-region-of-abkhazia.html>.

ethnic Georgians living in Gali region.

The same holds true for Transnistria, which is also failing to provide key services and goods and to fulfill its basic functions. As it was already mentioned, the Transnistrian government found itself incapable of fully paying the salaries and pensions in 2016, and though the government blamed the economic blockade imposed by Moldova and Ukraine, the civil society, in turn, blamed the government for embezzling public assets and the aid from Russia. Members of the civil society also suffer from human rights abuses, politically motivated arrests and detentions²¹. On the other hand, Nagorno-Karabakh shows totally different results, as it has established an effectively functioning state and social institutions, which do their best to meet the needs and expectations of the citizens. Year-by-year development of industry is offering new workplaces for the citizens, which is manifested in the low rate of unemployment (about 5%). The work of the government is transparent and has a high level of accountability: every year detailed reports on the state activities and especially expenses are made public on the official websites. Though there were claims about the privatization of major industries and economic activities by a small group of powerful elite, the government was able to address the following accusations by presenting precise documentation denying all the claims and accusations. The government also tries to stipulate birth rate by granting couples money after marriage and additional funds for the birth of each child²².

But at the end of the day one thing is unchangeable: no matter how effectively any type of positive changes and amendments are implemented, the political voice is formed not only through political processes, but also by the

mobilization possibilities of society, especially - civil society. It is yet early to talk about an institutionalised 'civil society' in Abkhazia, South Ossetia or Transnistria, but the societies of these entities constantly raise their voice about different issues. However, the suppression from the government has yet hindered the creation of any formal/ institutional basis for the civil society. The governments of Transnistria and South Ossetia, for example have put harsh restriction policies against NGOs in place. In Transnistria, the activities of IOs and NGOs are facing increasing challenges each year: they need the approval of authorities for all their projects - even meetings and visits. The few NGOs operating in South Ossetia receive funding mainly from Russia and are subject to government influence (whereas it should be the other way round). NGO legislation amendment made in 2014 is very similar to Russia's 'foreign agents' law of 2012, and deliberately increased the oversight capacity over NGO activity, especially the ones with foreign funding – constraining them to more detailed and more frequent reporting. However, functioning NGOs in Abkhazia get their funding mostly from abroad and are able to execute a certain influence on the government's policies. In Nagorno-Karabakh, the civil society is ascribed with an important role in state and civil activities, and the authorities do not restrain the activity of any civil society organizations.

Yet another important point: where the society is fragmented by conflicts and violence, the possibilities for political voice and social accountability are often eroded. A matter of special concern is the issue of mobilization capabilities of vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially in post-conflict entities. In post-conflict fragile states, the continuous disregard of fundamental rights, including the violation of children's rights, gender inequalities and the systematic expulsion of indigenous peoples and vulnerable minority groups, are largely conditioned by the absence of voting

21 Freedom in the World 2016: Transnistria, accessed March 16, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/transnistria>.

22 Freedom in the World 2016: Nagorno-Karabakh, accessed March 16, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/nagorno-karabakh>.

rights and legal channels for participation²³.

In Abkhazia and South Ossetia the ethnic Georgians, being excluded from the region and unable to come back, are, in fact, totally excluded from the political process. In Abkhazia ethnic minorities (Armenians, Russians, and Georgians) are under-represented in the People's Assembly.

Security field: The most troublesome issues of non-recognized states are mainly referring to the field of security. The absence or underdevelopment of international and local control mechanisms over the non-recognized entity, as well as the fact that fragile post-conflict states are likely to have limited authority over some regions within their own territory, becomes a truthfully prolific basis for the emergence and development of illegal groups and activities. Usually, the process of state-building and the later 'stateness' are more visible in the capital, whereas the population of the peripheries typically has a limited and insufficient interaction with the state. As a result, informal or regional authorities are more actively participating in the management of these regions. In such context, not only the traditional model of 'top-down' state-building and governance is put at risk, but also the threat of non-stability is increasing. At the same time, it's worth mentioning, that even the existence of international control and administration mechanisms is not yet a guaranty for stability. Even the UN, OSCE, EU and NATO efforts were not sufficient in stopping Kosovo, located at the centre of Europe – the cradle of democracy, from being a cradle of illicit activities like illegal arms trade, drugs, trafficking. This is even more troublesome because the problem is not only the disability, but first and foremost the non-willingness of formal authorities to address the issues, as they may themselves have a share in illicit activities and/or special agreements with the groups managing such kind of activities.

23 Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Another feature of non-recognized states is their high level of military potential – mainly conditioned by the fact that these states have gone through often multiple phases of armed conflict with their 'mother' states. Of course, the existing military potential may become the primary means of ensuring state sovereignty and national security, in particular in the cases of major failures of international bodies of administration and their efforts of maintaining peace, especially in the context of the current rise of terroristic attacks. However, there are some states, where the ratio of military forces to population size is rather large, but this still does not guarantee the absence of problems associated with 'stateness' in these countries. On the other hand, some recognized, mainly European, states lack military strength, whereas some non-recognized states do not. For instance, in a number of recognized states (e.g. Switzerland) the existence of the armed forces, and especially their size, are indeed no vital factors for 'stateness' as the countries successfully use other mechanisms, particularly supranational bodies and security guarantees. While observing the question from another angle, it can be stated, that the military potential, which does not get specific economic support by the state, (especially taking into account that non-recognized states in the majority of cases are not even able to fully ensure their state budgets), can become fragile and quickly lose its significance, as the process of armament is expensive also requires unceasing equipment upgrade.

When referring to the sources of security issues of non-recognized states of post-Soviet space, we can distinctly divide them into two groups: inner and outer threats. The inner sources of security threats are witnessed in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria. All three non-recognized states share the problems with contraband, money laundering (especially in Transnistria), trafficking, sale of drugs and weaponry and functioning of criminal organizations on their territory. Yet another interesting fact about Transnistria is

that it has a truly explosive 'inheritance' from Soviet era, particularly 40.000 tons of weaponry and ammunition left by the Soviet 14th Army. About 20.000 tons are yet to be removed, however, there are growing concerns over illegal sales, as there have been multiple cases of registered illegal sale of weaponry from Transnistria, including claims that this weaponry was even illegally shipped to the Balkans and used during the war in Yugoslavia. These concerns were and continue to be fuelled by the constant denials of Transnistrian authorities to undertake full investigations²⁴.

On the other hand, Nagorno-Karabakh is an example for a state suffering from an outside security threat: the tension along the cease-fire line and the daily increasing threat of war resumption²⁵. When it comes to inner threats, the only one is the presence of land mines, which NK forces and HALO Trust continue to clear²⁶. All in all, when talking about threats, what stays unchangeable is the fact, that both inner and outer threats are not only jeopardizing the security of the non-recognized states - condemning people living in those regions and already suffering from post-conflict consequences to even more torments, but also putting regional and international security at risk.

24 Transnistria's explosive inheritance from the Soviet era, accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/transnistrias-explosive-inheritance-from-the-soviet-era/a-18886862>.

25 Nagorno-Karabakh's Gathering War Clouds, accessed March 21, 2018, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh-azerbaijan/244-nagorno-karabakhs-gathering-war-clouds>.

26 The HALO Trust, accessed March 21, 2018, <https://www.halotrust.org/minefreenk/>.

Table 1: The assessment of non-recognized states of post-Soviet space by 'Peace Index'

	<u><i>Nagorno Karabakh</i></u>	<u><i>Abkhazia</i></u>	<u><i>South Ossetia</i></u>	<u><i>Transnistria</i></u>
<u>Political Index /30/</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>9</u>
State legitimacy	4	0	1	1
Political stability	3	1	0	1
Governance effectiveness	4	0	0	2
Constitutionality and rule of law	3	1	1	2
The right to vote	3	2	2	2
Effective mechanisms against corruption	1	0	0	1
<u>Economic Index /35/</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>8</u>
GDP per capita/ USD/	2	1	0	1
GDP annual growth rate	3	3	2	2
Income / Expenses GDP	3	1	0	1
Import / Net exports /GDP %/	0	0	0	1
External debt / GDP % /	1	0	0	1
Efficient income distribution / Gini coefficient /	3	0	0	0
Economic freedom	4	2	0	2
<u>Social Index /30/</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>14</u>
Employment indicator	4	1	0	2
Quality of public services	4	1	1	2
Accessibility and quality of health care and mandatory medical insurance	3	2	2	2
Literacy rate and quality of education	3	1	1	2
Minimal social conditions and protection of rights of refugees and IDPs	5	0	0	3
Environmental protection	5	2	2	3
<u>Security Index /30/</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>16</u>
Quality and Efficiency of Security Agencies	5	5	5	5
Border and customs control	5	2	2	2
Absence of secessionist tendencies, civil wars, units having territorial claims, illegal armed units, not self-determination conflicts and domestic armed conflicts	5	3	3	3
Absence of foreign military bases and peacekeeping missions	4	1	1	2
Absence of illicit activities (drugs, illegal arms, trafficking)	5	0	0	0
Absence of external threats	1	2	2	4
TOTAL GRADE sustainable – 100-125, middle level of sustainability – 75-100, fragile – 50-75, under the threat of failure – 25-50, failed – 0-25.	<u>83</u> <i>/middle level of sustainability/</i>	<u>31</u> <i>/under the threat of failure/</i>	<u>25</u> <i>/under the threat of failure/</i>	<u>47</u> <i>/under the threat of failure/</i>

Conclusion/Policy Recommendation

It is vital to detect the most significant problem in each non-recognized state, which is the factual starting point of all the other problems in these entities. Instead of compelling non-recognized states to adhere to a universal model of good governance, development, stability, and so forth, a unique approach should be developed for each particular case. A vivid example for this is East Timor, where the UN's demand of 'universality' ended in fragility close to that of a failed state.

When studying entities like Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria, it is rather hard to distinguish the central problem, as the number of problems and all their side-effects is indeed spectacular. However, deep and comprehensive study allows for the disclosure of the central problem in each of these states, which is the same in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and very similar in Transnistria. In Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the central problem is the steady decrease of control over their own statehood, particularly the control over political, economic, social and security processes, which are gradually being passed on to their 'patron' state Russia. As a result, any assistance mission is bound to hit this 'wall', i.e. it is practically impossible to help a state overcome any issues, while that particular state is transferring state functions to a 'patron' state at the same time. Especially when that 'patron' state is not very interested in ensuring welfare, stability, security, and the like but rather seeks to ensure its control over the entity. This means that a vicious circle is being created, which makes it practically impossible to amend any of the 'stateness' fields. Unless this situation is fixed, there won't be any visible progress in improving the 'stateness' level of these countries. Nevertheless, this is not an easily amendable problem, as neither the local governments, nor the 'patron' state especially see a problem in this situation: in fact the latter is getting the desired, whereas the government (in these cases an interim one) is enjoying all the

privileges of a non-controlled status coupled with the 'patron' state's permissiveness of their illicit activities and embezzlement. Hence neither party has a true interest in changing this set-up, which is so beneficial to them. So yet the only obtainable solution could be the employment of a bottom-up assistance policy – supporting the societies of these entities in issues like human rights, social development, and in developing a functioning civil society. It is noteworthy that the societies of these entities have themselves more than once boycotted the devolving of broader power to Russia. This ongoing criticism is a sign of hope that if assisted by other external actors, there could be a change towards establishing and developing human rights, social development, and more importantly – a civil society.

For Transnistria the central issue is its extreme economic fragility – this is the axis around which all the other issues emerge and continuously deepen. When analysing the reasons behind the problems within each field, one fact is coming to the surface: the political issues around social welfare, particularly its extreme decline, and security problems all arose due to illicit activities, which are directly connected to the afore-mentioned central problem of economic fragility. Although the local government in Transnistria is not at all against seizing the opportunities granted by non-control status, the number and weight of economic problems is so high, that it is a real challenge for it to continue withstanding that burden – compelling its officials to be more than eager to address the issue. This situation of extreme economic fragility could have been solved after the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, as Transnistria, being de-jure part of Moldova, started enjoying tariff-free exports to the EU. For the sake of justice, it should be noted, that Transnistria caught the wave and showed an evident enthusiasm: it lessened its exports to Russia and increased exports to the EU, which is a clear indicator that it is interested in seeking new economic opportunities and solutions to its economic problems. This also

shows that it would be more inclined towards the EU, if it had the chance. However, the hardest part is 'if it had a chance', as in fact it faced again economic collapse because of Russia's decline of aid (due to Russia's own economic problems), which portrays once again that the cooperation, especially the economic one, should be the starting point of assistance. As it was already mentioned, the inclination towards the EU - visible through using the very first chance of 'changing the favourite actor' despite of long-term 'ties' with Russia - is a good basis for the new and 'more compassionate towards sustainability' actor to help establishing democratic values, social welfare and foster security by starting with helping the entity economically.

And finally for Nagorno-Karabakh the central problem is the war: not 'frozen, not 'hot', but full with everyday tension across the whole borderline, where soldiers are being wounded or shot dead and sometimes even civilians from both sides. This situation is being kept alive by the continuous and immense financial input from the conflicting parties on each side of the conflict. So Nagorno-Karabakh is an entity, which is enlisting good results in political and social fields, even phenomenal for a non-recognized state, however the constant threat of resumption of a large-scale armed conflict would not just hinder the development, but collapse any success in any field. At the same time the entity also faces economic issues, which, despite the government's efforts to overcome the problem, have slim chances of improvement, as the continual need for extensive armament, equipment upgrade and all the other expenses in the field of security are taking too immense a share of state budget and the 'patron' state's assistance fund. So the achievement of sustainability, the improvement of already registered good results and prevailing of the existing problems is only possible after solving this central issue. A good starting point could be the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair addressing the problem of country's sale of more and more dreadful weaponry to

both sides of the conflict, while at the same time also restraining any other state from doing the same. Simultaneously, a change of the OSCE Minsk Group format should be initiated, particularly the rationality of format of three co-chair countries, which in their turn have deliberately divergent and colliding policies and interests.