



## **RIEKY AKO RUKOJEMNÍCI OZBROJENÝCH KONFLIKTOV VO VÝCHODNEJ EURÓPE: PRÍPAD RIEK SIVERSKI DONETS, KALMIUS A DNIESTER**

### **RIVERS AS HOSTAGES OF ARMED CONFLICTS IN EASTERN EUROPE: THE CASES OF SIVERSKI DONETS, KALMIUS AND DNIESTER RIVERS**

*Leonid Raneta<sup>1</sup>, Mykhaylo Kunychka*

Súčasný vývoj geopolitickej konfrontácie medzi jednotlivými subjektmi ohľadom ich sféry vplyvu viedol k vytvoreniu neuznaných štátov vo východnej Európe - oblasti konkurenčného boja medzi USA, Ruskom a EÚ. Autori sa pokúšajú chápať rieky Dniester, Kalmius a Siversky Donets ako príklady delimitujúcich línií bojujúcich strán a analyzovať environmentálny aspekt skutočnosti, že uvedené rieky sa prirodzene stali deliacimi hranicami konfliktov. Tento článok má za cieľ uskutočniť komparatívnu analýzu dvoch konfliktov vrátane už zmrazeného konfliktu medzi Moldavskom a Podnesterskou moldavskou republikou, ktorá preukázala neochotu uznať kolaps ZSSR. Krátkodobá vojna v Podnestersku sa odohrala medzi moldavskými vojenskými silami a ozbrojenými skupinami PMR a vyvrcholila v lete 1992 na rieke Dniester, kde sa dnes nachádzajú ruské mierové sily. V neposlednom rade sa zameriavame na východoukrajinský konflikt, kde Ruskom podporovaná tzv. Donecká a Luhanská národná republika bojujú proti národným ozbrojeným silám ústredných ukrajinských orgánov, a kde sa rieky Donets a Kalmius stali delimitujúcou líniou dvoch bojujúcich strán po vyhlásení dočasného prímeria.<sup>2</sup>

**Kľúčové slová:** ozbrojený konflikt, vodné zdroje, Ukrajina, Moldavská republika

Current development of the geopolitical confrontation between particular subjects for their spheres of influence has led to formation of the

<sup>1</sup> Ing, Leonid Raneta, PhD. Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics, Dolnozemska cesta 1, 852 35 Bratislava, e-mail: leonid.raneta@euba.sk

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unrecognized states in Eastern Europe – the targeted region of competitive clash between the United States, Russia and the EU. The authors are trying to consider the Dniester, Kalmius and Siversky Donets rivers as examples of delimiting lines of the warring parties and to analyse the environmental aspect of the fact that the mentioned rivers have become naturally dividing frontiers of the conflicts. This paper led to conduct a comparative analysis of the two conflicts, including the already frozen conflict between Moldova and the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, which has shown the reluctance to acknowledge the collapse of the USSR. Short-term Transnistrian war recouped between Moldovan forces and armed groups of the PMR and culminated in the summer of 1992 on the Dniester River, where Russian peacekeepers is located today. Last but not least, we are focusing on Eastern Ukrainian conflict where the so called Donetsk and Lugansk People's republics, supported by Russia, are combating the national armed forces of the central Ukrainian authorities, and where Donets and Kalmius became a frontline of two warring parties after the proclamation of temporary armistice.

Key words: armed conflict, water resources, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova

JEL: Q25, Q34

## **1 Introduction**

The contemporary civilization has always praised the significance of rivers. In the Greek mythology, rivers played an important role in the geography of the underworld and had mystical powers. As the mystical river Styx gave Achilles his power, other rivers gave civilizations economic and defense advantages. In the past, rivers were vital infrastructure arteries and played a role of trade highways and important logistical connections. Rivers often divide nations and provide natural barriers during wars. Nowadays, some watercourses serve as border lines between states and nations. Some rivers historically separate cultures and civilizations. Their economic significance is stable in peaceful times, but changes in times of war, when the combatant parties focus their attention on rivers as powerful natural defense barriers.

Rivers and artificial waterways are vital sources of water that is essential to human survival and poor for substitutes. Furthermore, water resources respect no political borders and fluctuate in space and time (Wolf, 1998). River basins link riparian states (Dinar, 2009), as well as other political or military actors compel them to think over political, economic, social, and environmental issues together. In the context of these interdependencies, the room for cooperation and conflict dilemma appears. In the regions of arid and semi-arid zones, like the one of Eastern Ukraine, water availability is much more aggravated. In that case, water supply becomes an object of season fluctuations and puts the adjacent states in front of possible genesis of new or intensification of ongoing armed resistance.

Water is a vital resource for heap aspects of societal welfare, including the satisfaction of basic needs and development of economic life, therefore its scarcity can be a fundamental argument not only for conflict initiation, but for cooperation fostering, too. In other words, partnership within states sharing common aquifers becomes very significant when water scarcity enhances. Additionally, cooperation or conflict initiation is also an important issue when water pollution, fishery and navigation aspects are becoming the case of mutual relations in the framework of common river basins. Therein an important role is played by the theoretical representation of the interrelationships of two and more riparian states, embedded in a realistic and institutional theory of international relations. If typical scenario for realism school is acquiring a resource, such as water, for state interests through the use of military force, then institutionalism is characterized by a peaceful solution of the resource sharing between the riparian states with the help of establishing partnerships through the prism of common interests. Despite various theoretical views, the issues of water resources, environment and state interests are an inherent part of the problem of interaction between state and non-state actors of world and regional politics. As Gleick (1993) put on, water may play multiple roles in contributing to regional conflicts. He distinguished following categories that encompass the role of water resources in international conflicts. Water resources can be perceived as a military and political goal or as an instrument of war. The second category is frequently associated with hydropolitics (Waterbury, 1979) and weaponization (King, 2016) of water at that.

As for today's Europe, things have not changed so much in comparison with the past. There are still tension zones, new armed conflicts change borders and new quasi-states arise. There are two important unresolved conflicts in the Eastern Europe, which are tightly associated with the watercourses. First is the Dnestrian conflict, which erupted in the early nineties after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the Republic of Moldova, along the Dniester River that separates the combatants. The second one is in the eastern part of Ukraine and it is one of the most current conflicts in the region since the beginning of the millennium.

The history of Europe is mainly the history of armed conflicts of different intensity and implications for the future. During the biggest and the most important war of the past, the Second World War, rivers played a very important role. Battles and war operations for such rivers like Volga, Don, Southern Bug, Dniester, Vistula, and of course Elbe, marked by their toponyms important milestones of the war also underlining the importance of those rivers. The new millennium did not change those postulates and in modern conflicts rivers often act as important strategic objects. The most current and intense armed conflicts of the past decades were no exception, for example the strategic role of the Euphrates in the ongoing Syrian conflict was the main goal for all the implicated combatant parties: the Kurds aiming for the banks of the

Euphrates implicated the Turkish army to enter the Syrian territory, central government forces are also aiming to gain control over the west bank of the Euphrates and the ISIS capital is also situated on the Euphrates. Another similar situation occurred in the Eastern Europe in the Republic of Moldova, where an important river flow gave its toponym (Dniester) to an armed conflict (Transnistrian War) and to an unrecognized state Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic also marking its strategic importance. Another example is the most latest and resonating conflict of the 21th century in Europe, where conflicting parties are divided by the Kalmius and the Northern Donets rivers. These rivers serve not only as separating lines of the combatant parties, but are also important infrastructure parts of a great social and ecological importance.

The purpose of the paper is to investigate the role of rivers in Eastern European armed conflict. We focus on issues of the Dniester river, Kalmius and Siversky Donets rivers, which represent an important strategic object not only for military purposes, but for economic and social issues as well. Besides, environmental issues are studied. Could these rivers, as a source of water, be perceived as an aggravating factor of the ongoing and frozen conflict? Is it possible to polemize that these rivers are one of the instruments of war, or inversely, create a common base for conflict resolution as it gives way for a cooperative action?

## **2 CONFLICTS AND RIVERS ISSUES IN EASTERN EUROPE**

The practice of international relations in recent years shows that the international community does not always manage to prevent or at least postpone armed conflicts, both domestic and international. Over the past decade we can observe the significant increasing of their intensity and quantity. Special attention is deserved to long run and fresh conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen and, last but not least, the armed conflict in the Eastern part of Ukraine. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program recorded the high intensity of armed conflicts in 2014, and according to Petterson & Wallensteen (2015), this is the highest number of conflicts since the beginning of the new millennium. At the beginning of the new decade, there were no objective expectations that a conflict of such a scale could have erupted on the closer borders of the Western hemisphere.

Ukrainian crisis has not affected the domestic development of the country alone; on the contrary, it has major ramifications beyond Ukraine (Trenin, 2014). Ukrainian crisis, with all its specificity and global implication, has caused the cessation of generally cooperative phase and, at the same time, started a new era of aggravated contest in the U.S.-Russian relations.

The critically unstable situation in Ukraine began after President Viktor Yanukovich had announced the freezing of the idea of political and economic association with the European Union in November 2013, and had inversely accepted a

Russian 15 billion USD loan in combination with a 30% discount on natural gas supply. Such an opposite change in the Ukrainian foreign policy caused a storm of indignation in the camp of the opposition and a mass protest movement spread throughout the country. Enrage mass of protesters was highly dissatisfied with the socioeconomic reality formed during the era of president Yanukovich that from a certain degree can be associated with the upturn of economic inequality and prosperous corruption on all governmental levels, and the president's family was not an exception. In early January 2014, it spilled over into clashes between protesters and law enforcement agencies in Kiev (Skvrnda, 2015). As a result, hundred of opposition representatives were killed. Any attempt to make a mutual consent deal between the opposition and the president failed and during the night of February 22 Yanukovich fled to its closer associate (Mearsheimer, 2014). The new Western oriented government was formed in Kiev.

The development of the situation in Ukraine, which Moscow considers an inherent part of its political and economic interest, has not been indifferent to its eastern neighbor. The rise of the pro-Western political coalition with the inclusions of nationalistic ideology, the intentions of Ukraine's rapprochement with the NATO and the development of tendencies to suppress the linguistic and cultural rights of the Russian speaking population in Ukraine was an unacceptable scenario for revisionist Russian political elites. The main idea of Russia's strategic response was the retention of Ukraine outside the North Atlantic Alliance and its return to the ranks of the Russian satellites and its further incorporation to the Eastern integration community. Large number of the Russian-speaking population in the southeast and the presence of Russian military forces in the port of Sevastopol played a decisive role in the reaction of the Russian Federation to the events in Ukraine. Russian special forces took control over the local government along with the law enforcement agencies. Later, a local referendum was held on the accession of the Crimean peninsula to the Russian Federation and, in the second half of March 2014, the agreement was signed in Moscow. Supporting the eastern Russian speaking regions of Ukraine also began. Well-organized military units were formed and power in Donetsk and Luhansk was seized. After the occupation of the Crimean peninsula, an armed conflict in the southeast of Ukraine arose. Matthews (2014) and Peterson & Kuck (2014), for instance, define the Eastern Ukrainian armed conflict as civil war, on the contrary, Trenin (2014) operates with the broad definition 'Ukrainian crisis'. In the context of in-depth scientific literature, the situation in Ukraine can be also identified as 'war' (Petras 2014, Petro 2014) or by the relatively recent term 'hybrid war' (Hoffman, 2014). The Russian Federation in every possible way denies military assistance from its armed forces and officially does not recognize the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics either. Moreover, the Ukrainian central government has

imposed a so-called antiterrorist operation (Trenin, 2014) aimed at liberating the eastern regions of the Donbas from self-proclaimed armed groups.

The armed conflict in the Donbas resulted in a large number of side effects of the economic and humanitarian nature. In the context of the Eastern Ukrainian crisis, special attention should be paid to the humanitarian aspects and problems of the supply of water resources and electricity to the occupied regions. The unfolding of hostile actions had a negative impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including free access to suitable water resources. According to UNICEF, about 1.3 million children and adults in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions are suffering from serious water supply crisis due to damage or destruction of water supply networks. The problems of water supply and water resources condition in the war zone were discussed frequently within the framework of the Minsk Agreements. However, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine reported on human rights violations related to the continuation of hostilities (OSCE, 2015), which had its effect on providing access to a sufficiently safe, acceptable and affordable drinking and industrial water. Numerical damages of water aqueducts during the armed clashes were recorded and targeted manipulation in water supply systems was also the case. Violation of supplies of vital water quantities for various reasons not only affected the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region, but also led to negative social and economic development and further exacerbation of so little relations between active belligerents. The complex system of natural and artificial waterways has become not only a field but also the shelling object of furious combats. Hostages of the acute conflict are the front-line rivers such as Siversky Donets or Kalmius rivers and the system of canals and pipelines that are a man-made adjacent part of these natural waterways.

During the first years of independence of the Republic of Moldova, a very similar separatist conflict erupted also in the eastern part of the country. The nationalistic processes that led to the creation of the Moldovan state also led to political divergence between the western and eastern regions of the country. The natural barrier in form of the Dniester river flow marked the division line between the separatist quasi-state Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic. The logic of the confrontation in the case of Moldova was very similar to the current conflict in Ukraine. The discrimination of Russian language on the wave of nationalism, armed clashes resulting in human and material casualties, the strategic support of separatist region by the Russian Federation, western support of the central government and also the river flows that divide the conflicting parties – all these are similar characteristics of both conflicts. Another similar characteristics is that peace talks on the grounds of the OSCE transformed these conflicts from the state of war into ongoing frozen conflicts with different stages of intensity. In the case of Transnistrian conflict, these

stages of frozen conflicts varied from reintegration initiatives (the Kozak memorandum) to economic sanctions and transportation blockade. In the case of Ukraine, with the realization of Minsk II protocol, the conflict is on the track to becoming a frozen conflict, therefore the path is also very similar. Another similarity is based on water flows that separate these conflicting parties.

### **3 WATER SCARCITY IN WAR ZONES AND ENVIRONMENT**

Wetlands of the Dniester are of a great international importance. The main problem today is the unsatisfactory quality of the Dniester water, including the quality of drinking water supply sources. The reduction of negative consequences for ecology of the flow requires joint, coordinated measures by riparian states. The improvement of the situation using international experience proposed by the international community, including the impact assessment of projects that may affect ecosystems under the jurisdiction of another country. The situation is complicated by the Transnistrian conflict, which hinders the effective cooperation of all interested parties. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the environmental issues of a transboundary river are related to humanitarian problems, which are usually decided by countries outside the context of conflicts between them.

The main problem in the environmental sphere, which is related to the state of the Dniester, is the ambitious policy of the Transnistrian authorities, which, as a result of the conflict, has created a structure of social and economic governance, without taking into account the real environmental problems of the region and without the focus on cooperation in this area of Moldova.

As follows from the above, the environmental problems of Transdnistria are common for the entire Dniester river basin. And although the necessary institutional and legal frameworks have been created in the region for a balanced joint policy to preserve the natural environment and increase the environmental potential in the region, its uncertain status and political ambitions of the administration impede effective cooperation both with the Moldovan authorities within the Transnistrian settlement framework and with international structures as part of confidence- and security-building measures. Unfortunately, even these measures, initiated with the aim of creating favourable conditions for the Transnistrian settlement process, did not yield the expected result and to date have not received any concrete incarnation (OSCE, 2003).

The situation in Transnistria, in many respects, has many similar points with the conflict, which has been going on for several years in the east of Ukraine. In general, we can say that the frozen conflicts have much in common.

Considering the issues of ecology, a similar problem of the safety of the water resources of the Donbass and Transnistria is that the rivers have become involuntary

hostages and conditional boundaries for the flow of armed confrontations. If the Dniester had become such a conventional border in the Transnistrian conflict, then the Seversky Donets and Kalmius rivers play the same dividing role between the Donbas and the central authorities of Ukraine.

Destruction of the water supply and sanitation infrastructure, chemical water pollution, as well as power outages in discharge facilities, poses a serious threat, both for water resources and ecosystem as a whole. As a result of the military actions, the Lugansk water canal was repeatedly on the verge of a sanitary disaster. Using military operations, Marauders were stealing cable lines and individual parts of pipes as well. As a result, a number of emergencies constantly arise in the water supply and sewerage network. Lugansk region dwellers use water mostly from aboveground sources that requires serious disinfection. Chlorine delivery routes often pass through the battlefields and for a long time there were no possible delivery options.

The consequences of water pollution can be unpredictable and extremely dangerous, however, it is simply impossible to provide the necessary control over the quality of drinking water in the zone of combat operations. According to samples of water from the Siversky Donets River and adjacent open water supply network, the concentration of sulphates exceeds the norm fivefold and nitrates almost twice.

The purposeful destruction of water pipes, as well as its accompanying damages as a result of hostilities, affect the functioning of water supply systems. The lack of access to water and its poor quality pose a threat to human health and sanitation and may lead to a significant limitation of food production. A negative impact on social and economic development and political stability can be also the case, which, in turn, will lead to further exacerbation of the ongoing Donbas conflict. The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security issues is aimed at reducing the risk that water will become a potential source of conflict, as well as using water resources as a tool for creating an atmosphere of trust and further cooperation (OSCE 2015).

Access to safe water in the territories of the Donbas region affected by the conflict remains an actual and acute problem nowadays. Frequent interruptions in water supply are due to following factors. Water supply networks are out of date heritage of communist era (Kunychka et al. 2017). Additionally, already out of date pipelines were damaged during the conduct of hostilities. A decrease in the functionality of important water pumping stations due to power outages caused by firing of power grids is also an important issue in the region. Access problems caused by the presence of armed groups, placement of mines or unexploded ordnance, and the poor condition of roads that prevents local residents from reaching the wells or receiving delivered water, as well as access problems related to reconstruction activities by water network operator. Legal restrictions of freedom of movement and supply of goods through the buffer line, which thus affects



the supply of water from settlements controlled by Ukrainian authorities to settlements that are under the management of separatists, is another cause of water supply shortages. Last but not least, frequent disconnections of water supply networks, which contributed to the deteriorations of so little relations between belligerents (Volkova 2014).

As a consequence, the risk of the spread of water-borne diseases and related health problems has increased, as the population is not able to safely store or transport sufficient amounts of water. There is also a threat to the quality of tap water due to the need to maintain regular supply of chlorine and other reagents needed in water treatment plants that create an increased risk of secondary infection. Such barriers to access to sufficient, safe, and affordable water pose a threat to the most vulnerable population categories, in particular children, people with disabilities or chronic diseases, elderly people living in inaccessible territories affected by the conflict. Due to geography and operational characteristics of water supply networks that were built after the World War II, water supply shortages is a more serious problem for eastern belligerent.

The state of the Kalmius river, which also turned out to be the water border of military operations, represents a great environmental problem of the Donbass region. It should be noted that from the point of view of economic activity, the Kalmius is one of the most important rivers in the Donetsk region. The Kalmius river is the primary source of water for industrial and agricultural purposes; likewise, its basin is polluted by more than 60% of wastewater originating from local enterprises. For the Donetsk region, the Kalmius basin plays a huge role and has important economic, social, historical, and recreational significance. Even before the outbreak of the armed conflict, the administrative authorities of the Donetsk region raised the issue of the environmentally critical state of the Kalmius river, while the problems of protecting the Kalmius river basin and rational use became increasingly acute with the important regional scope. Before and during the conflict, the water resources of the Kalmius river did not meet the requirements of the drinking water standard, furthermore, most pollutants exceed the norm by several times.

In the Kalmius riverbed, there are about seven reservoirs, and along its tributaries there are about 30 sewage water ponds. Industrial and municipal enterprises from local settlements discharge their wastewater directly into the river and its tributaries after insufficient cleaning or without it at all. As a result, the level of water pollution in the river exceeds all permissible standards by hundreds of times. Even before the armed clashes, 600,000 tons of salts were annually dumped into the Kalmius. The Kalmius is the most technogenically-loaded river in the region, especially in the upper reaches of the river. Only in summer the volume of sewage and mine waters is almost 10 times higher than the volume of natural runoff. Together with

the mine waters of only one mine, 600 kg of palladium was dumped annually into water bodies. Also, bacteriological contamination of mine waters that enter the river leads to significant changes in water quality. Furthermore, many areas of the river are covered with a multi-meter layer of silt, which mainly includes heavy metals. At the same time, today there are no economically rational methods for demineralizing these harmful deposits.

Nowadays, the environmental situation in the Kalmius river is significantly complicated by the fact that it has become an unwarranted boundary of military clashes between the armed groups of separatist authorities and Ukrainian armed forces. In addition to the previously unsolved environmental problems of pollution of the river with man-made waste, the river is on the verge of an ecological catastrophe due to the consequences of military operations.

Several years ago, local authorities attempted to implement cleaning activities of one of the Kalmius reservoirs located in the city limits of Donetsk city. However, these works were of a local nature and, according to environmentalists, were doomed to failure. After all, it is difficult to make certain local cleaning when there is an upstream discharge of wastewater from the mine. With such a variety and a large number of pollutants in the Kalmius river, the solution of the ecological problem is possible only with a comprehensive approach. Unfortunately, in view of the military actions in the territory of the Donetsk region, all planned measures to clean the sub-basin of the Kalmius river have not been implemented. Moreover, the state of the water sources in the Donetsk region was aggravated by the current bombardments and the water supply of the region was violated.

Unfortunately, given the fact that the situation at the estuary of the Kalmius river is not improving, and military operations are continuing, it is not necessary to predict the positive development of measures for water purification in the Kalmius river. The mutual relations between Russia, as a patron of the separatist regions, and Ukrainian government boils down to the fact that one side must give up to its own interests, and negotiations do not lead to a stabilization of the situation. Therefore, it can be with certainty said that in this situation the problems of water supply and environment of the Kalmius or Siversky Donets rivers remain practically beyond the attention of the legal authorities.

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

Thus, the analysis and study of theoretical and statistical material on a given topic makes it possible to draw the following conclusions. It is obvious that any armed conflict is not only the human losses, the destruction of the infrastructure of cities and territories engaged in military actions, but also a direct environmental threat to natural resources, and this problem is especially acute in the sphere of water resources and

water supply. Moreover, the environmental problem lies not only in the fact that the release of harmful substances into the atmosphere and water during explosions and bombardments leads to irreversible consequences and deterioration of the local environment, as well as the existing problems of contaminated industrial areas remain unresolved and in turn create a direct threat of ecological cataclysm.

The analysis of scientific works on the issue of background and the course of the Transnistrian conflict gives a certain basis for such conclusions about the reasons for its occurrence. The main reason for the armed conflict in Transdniestria is the cardinal change in the position of the party nomenclature in the system of political power in the period from 1989 to 1991. On the whole, there were several prerequisites for the emergence of the conflict: the ideological factor, language and political manipulation. Initially, the origin of the conflict occurred on ideological grounds - the nomenclature of Transdniestria was a supporter of the integrity of the USSR and propagandized by any means for preserving the integrity of the republic within the Soviet Union. In turn, the Chisinau authorities grouped around ethno-national ideas and promoted the idea of Moldova to join Romania. Consequently, the hostile party nomenclature of Transnistria reacted on intensification of ethnopolitization processes in Chisinau. In turn, the process of ethnopolitization took place quite quickly and not under the slogans of Moldovan patriotism, but under the slogans of Romanization, which also in turn contributed to aggravation of the opposition of the Moldovan society.

The next reason that played an important role in the escalation of the Transnistrian conflict was the language factor. Adoption of the language law, which enforced the Moldovan language identical to the Romanian language with the Latin alphabet, became the reason for the aggressive reaction of the Russian-speaking population of Transnistria, who perceived this law as a direct threat for themselves and their descendants. An important political prerequisite, which gave Transnistria the opportunity to determine its state status, and, consequently, made its participation in the conflict justified, was the problem of autonomy. In addition, the intention of the Transnistrian nomenclature to gain independence from Chisinau was also of an economic nature. Due to the fact that the Transnistrian economy accounted for about 40% of Moldova's total profits, the Transnistrian authorities tried to retain control over the territory and were interested in escalation of the conflict.

Thus, the peculiarities of the genesis of the conflict in Transnistria are following. Despite the fact that Transnistria makes about 12.2% of the territory of Moldova, historically it considered itself an equal subject with another part of the republic. The emergence of the conflict was largely due to the fact that the authorities in Chisinau and Transnistria turned out to be diametrically opposed in their ideological views. On the one hand, there were ultra-rightists, on the other hand, ultra-leftists. In

this situation, the nomenclature of Transnistria had no chance to be properly represented in the republican authorities. The direction of the actions of the political forces that took part in the conflict was not connected with the assertion of the sovereignty of Moldova, but on the contrary was subordinated to integration into foreign state entities and orientation to external factors, both from Chisinau and from Transnistria. Opposing external geopolitical orientations of Transnistria and Chisinau inspired their leadership with confidence in military assistance from these external forces. The rapid consolidation of the population of Transnistria around the local nomenclature was caused by the loss of linguistic communication and the cultural and information environment. The sharp escalation of armed confrontation in the conflict was due to the massive use of military forces on both sides and the presence of the 14th Russian army on the left bank of the Dniester river.

As for the environmental aspect of the problem, the Dniester river, which has become a natural boundary separating the conflicting parties of the conflict, has become a hostage to the current situation. Initially, before the outbreak of armed clashes, the state of the Dniester river required close attention and development of cleaning activities to ensure the safety wastewater level and industrial chemicals that are dumped into the river by local enterprises. Efforts to reduce the negative impact on the Dniester basin require joint efforts and coordinated measures, however, the conflict has essentially frozen most of the projects to improve the water conditions of the Dniester river. Despite the fact that both sides are currently trying to implement environmental projects to clean up the waters of the Dniester, the situation is still complicated by the Transnistrian conflict, which has not been fully resolved and hampers the effective cooperation of all stakeholders. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the environmental issues of a transboundary river are related to humanitarian problems that are usually resolved by countries outside the context of the conflict.

As for the armed conflict between eastern separatists and the National Army of Ukraine, in this case, there are a lot of common points with the frozen Transnistrian conflict. Just like the Transnistrian conflict, the war in the Donbas has ideological, political and linguistic preconditions. The main point of the similarity of the two conflicts is the unrecognized independence of the territories, although it is inherently conditional, since both satellites cannot exist without the support of the Russian Federation. Both territories also appealed for help to external forces, hence the US, the European Union and Russia are involved in the conflict. But for all the similarity of eastern European conflicts, there is as much a difference in principle in them as well. The conflict in the Donbas region prior to the events of the Maidan and the course of European integration was not so pronounced, and the language issue was not so acute. Analysing the events and agreeing with the opinion of some experts, it can be

concluded that the armed conflict between the separatist regions and Ukrainian armed forces has been created artificially and is the result of political manipulation by external stakeholders.

Thus, the war in the Donbas region became a source of environmental cataclysm, primarily in the water sector. Even before the conflict, the state of the Siversky Donets and Kalmius rivers was catastrophic because of the huge amount of wastewater that was discharged by the processing and extractive industries. At the present time, the situation has been aggravated by the fact that both rivers have become the natural boundary of the armed actions and bear the brunt of the environmental consequences of military operations.

Investigating both eastern European conflicts, it is obvious that environmental problems and management of water resources require certain counter measures. As for Transnistria, the best way out are the joint projects between Transnistrian authorities and Chisinau to protect the water resources of the Dniester river, which should, on the example of such situations, exclude political disputes in joint activities related to the protection of water resources and make joint efforts to implement them.

Taking into account the abovementioned issues, it is possible to formulate a number of recommendations for overcoming negative consequences and managing environmental risks in the framework of Donbas water resources. Foremost, comply with the set of measures for the implementation of the Minsk Agreements from the 12th of February 2015, including an immediate and complete ceasefire and the removal of heavy weapons. Refrain from placing military installations and positions near objects that pose a direct environmental threat. Furthermore, eschew attacks directed against civilian facilities necessary to ensure the functioning of water supply. Last but not least, fulfil responsibilities to ensure the protection of water resources as a matter of priority. Ensure the civilian population, including its most vulnerable groups, respects inalienable human rights and fundamental freedoms that include free access to water resources and the availability of safe drinking water.

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