



RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT IN PROTRACTED CONFLICTS RESOLUTION: HUMAN DIMENSION

Sergey Rastoltsev, IMEMO, Russia

Paper prepared within the framework of “The OSCE Network of Think
Tanks and Academic Institutions”,
 (“Protracted Conflicts in the OSCE Region:
Innovative Approaches for Co-operation in the Conflict Zones” project)

**Presented for “Economic connectivity in European conflict regions”
workshop
Vienna, July 1, 2016**

BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Aim of the project: looking beyond the traditional conflict resolution as a political negotiation process, rather to develop innovative approaches for **international engagement** in the thematic areas of the **three Helsinki “baskets:”** security, economics/environment, and the human dimension; and seeks to analyze these themes across several conflicts
- How the everyday international engagement can **change the conflict environment** in a particular sphere based on practical experience
- My aim: looking how Russia is involved in the **humanitarian sphere** in protracted conflicts
 - Humanitarian aid, academic exchange programs, organization of social and cultural events (including support of Russian language programs as a tool of communication for conflicting sides), support of compatriots living in conflicting regions, exchanges between Russian and conflicting sides NGOs
 - Possible interconnection with other areas, e.g. economic

RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSNISTRIA

- Large-scale humanitarian assistance
- One of the most pro-Russian regions in the Post-Soviet Space
- An important centre of Russian language and culture abroad, part of the so-called “Russian world”
 - 200 thousand Russian citizens in Transnistria (about 1/3 of population)
 - Multinational region (Russians-Moldovans-Ukrainians) as a model for Eurasian integration
 - Russian military presence and outpost of geopolitical influence
 - Integrated with Russia in some areas, decrease in economy, but maintains humanitarian cooperation
- 4 main formats of cooperation
 - 1) Local humanitarian organizations
 - 2) Russian humanitarian organizations
 - 3) Educational institutions
 - 4) Direct Russian humanitarian aid

RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSNISTRIA

- 1) Local humanitarian organizations – NGOs, among which are the “Union of Russian Communities of Transnistria” and “Congress of Russian Communities of Moldova”, working close with the Russian funds
 - education, culture, art, patriotic education of children and youth, supporting teachers' community
 - Ex. of projects: “The Great Victory – one for all”, “Historical Memory” and “We are part of the history of your country, Russia!”, “Best Russian school abroad: Transnistria” and “Teacher of the Russian world”
- 2) Russian humanitarian organizations, among which are the
 - “**Russian world**” (“Russki Mir”)” number of projects aimed at popularizing the Russian language and culture, mostly in Transnistria
 - “Rossotrudnichestvo”: “Russian Center of Science and Culture” in Chisinau
- 3) Educational institutions, including
 - Transnistrian State University (Tiraspol) works within Russian standards
 - Slavic University (Chisinau)
 - scholarships to study in Russia (separately for Moldova and Transnistria)
- 4) Direct Russian humanitarian aid
 - 2007-2010 \$55,5 million aimed for 137 thousand Transnistrian pensioners in the form of supplements to pensions (the main part of this financial support) and for catering in hospitals and for children
 - Since 2011: increase of the Russian assistance
 - only in 2013 \$33 million, including on social allowances (as before) and the purchase of vehicles for the emergency services
 - Special Autonomous Nonprofit Organization “**Eurasian Integration**” was established in 2013 to construct hospitals, kindergartens and schools (14 objects in total) in different parts in Transnistria with value of about \$ 50 million
 - Because of the the ruble devaluation humanitarian assistance for Transnistria over the past 3 years in dollar terms has been decreasing: 2014 – \$27 million, 2015 – about \$15 million

RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

- No direct official assistance for NK from Russia
 - Low proportion of the Russian population (0.1% -171 people: 2005 census)
 - High degree of Karabakh integration with Armenia – most NK residents have Armenian passports
 - Huge role of AM/AZ diasporas living in Russia (both have ca. 600 thousand people)
- Russian language remains a main connecting link between Russia and NK
 - Support of NK government and interest from local communities
 - Chief specialist on the Russian language
 - One Russian-language school
 - Artsakh State University: cooperation with Russian universities, “Center of Friends of Russian Culture”
 - “Days of Russian word”: local, not Russian initiative
 - “Russian Community of Nagorno-Karabakh”
 - “TRANSCRIPT” program (translation of Russian literature to Armenian – rare example of direct Russian-Karabakh cooperation)

RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT

- South Ossetia
 - 90% of the population have Russian citizenship
 - Russian is a second official state language and the language of education on all levels
 - Russian language program financed by Russia: learning materials, workshop for Russian language teachers, memorable dates of famous Russian people
 - Cultural, academic, youth exchanges, educational, including quotas to study in Russia
- Abkhazia
 - 30% of the population have Russian citizenship, 20% gets pensions from Russia
 - Russian is a state language and many educational institutions work in Russian
 - Coordination in sport, cultural (e.g. libraries) youth policy (common youth forums), media (common informational policy)
 - Russian investments
 - 2015-17 worth \$ 150 million
 - Reconstruction of cultural, sport, educational institutions,
 - Tourism, agricultural, electricity objects

CASES COMPARISON

- Transnistria
 - Large-scale official humanitarian programs and support of local communities
 - Main aim of Russia – to support compatriots and Russian-speaking population as a whole
 - Focus on citizenship (primarily Russian citizens), geographical origin (primarily Transnistria), and language (Russian only)
 - Main Russian interest – to bring both conflict regions in the humanitarian area closer to itself on the basis of Russian language and education, rather than to develop special reconciliation program for Moldova/Transnistria
 - However the Russian language itself is a powerful tool for reconciliation – indirect influence
- Nagorno-Karabakh
 - No special strategy of humanitarian assistance
 - Most initiatives are local, supported by NGOs, private philanthropists and commercial organizations of Russia and Armenia
 - High interest of Karabakh people to Russian language and cooperation with Russia
- South Ossetia and Abkhazia
 - Official humanitarian support
 - Russia as a main sponsor of humanitarian sphere and reconstruction
 - Russia has taken a responsibility after 2008 recognition
- Those conflict regions are important for Russia in the humanitarian area that have Russian citizens (most important)/ Russian-speaking people and can be an outpost of Russian influence

WHAT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OSCE?

- Concerning Russia's humanitarian assistance to the de-facto states, Russia conducts its own policy, pursuing its interests first rather than trying to improve reconciliation process
- The influence is quite high, but could decrease with economic crisis
- Russian language as a tool for reconciliation: how it can be used? Which language are the "negotiation language"?
- Challenge for the OSCE: how to redirect and integrate Russian humanitarian policy into direct reconciliation process
- Who is responsible for reconstruction?

Thanks for your attention!

SERGEY RASTOLTSEV

JUNIOR RESEARCHER
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
PRIMAKOV INSTITUTE OF WORLD ECONOMY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
(IMEMO) OF THE RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (MOSCOW, RUSSIA)
SERGEJ-RAS@YANDEX.RU