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POLICY BRIEF

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Human Security Dimension across the Frozen Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space

Introduction [1]

An analysis of the serious problems arising from the so-called frozen conflicts in the post-soviet region forms the basis of this policy paper with particular reference to human security in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria. Despite many similarities among them, the entities are not entirely homogeneous and since the conflicts vary in severity and scope, an individualized approach is required in the provision of much needed human security in each. The research objective of this paper focuses on the human security question without direct reference to negotiation and political issues. A community relation's theory has been employed to coin forward-looking proposals for possible reconciliation and initiatives. The core principle of community relation's theory is that effective intergroup conflict resolution requires significant changes in how people from different communities interact with each other at the local level [2]. It is generally recognized that there is a need for international community to support reconciliation initiatives in a more active manner in the regions and to promote personal contacts in order to bypass the political stalemate which often exists. Specifically, it is in line with the international community thought and

its broader security perception, which goes beyond military threats, arms control and disarmament, and incorporates commitments to human rights and democracy, reflecting the human dimension as inseparable part of security concept.

Human security and community relations theory

In OSCE terminology, the term "human dimension" is used to describe the set of norms and activities related to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which is regarded within the OSCE as one of three dimensions of security, together with the politico-military, and the economic and environmental dimensions [3]. It is widely recognized that human security seeks to protect fundamental freedoms and the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment; it creates political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity [4]. As a matter of fact, human security concept moves from traditional military threats and state-centric approach to the security of communities and individuals that suffer from conflicts, natural disasters, absence of human rights protection etc. Since the policy paper focuses on human security issues in the frozen conflicts, it is appropriate to add a community relations theory, which is linked to

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1 It is based on the discussions at the conference entitled The EU and the Eurasian Economic Union: moving towards Cooperation held in Milano 07-03-2016 and the paper prepared for the OSCE workshop entitled Protracted conflicts in the OSCE region: innovative approaches for cooperation in the conflict zones held in Vienna 04-07-2016.

2 M.H. Ross, 'Creating the conditions for peacemaking: theories of practice in ethnic conflict resolution', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol.23, Issue 6, 2000, pp. 1002-1034.

3 OSCE Human Dimension Commitments. Vol 1. Thematic Compilation. OSCE/ODIHR 2011.

4 An Overview of the Human Security Concept and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. UN. <www.un.org/humansecurity/sites/www.un.org.humansecurity/files/human_security_in_theory_and_practice_english.pdf>.

practice and methodology in the field of reconciliation. According to Hugh Frazer and Mari Fitzduff [5], the term community relations was coined in the early sixties in Britain and pertained to solutions being sought there in relation to the problem of racial disharmony, arising from the immigration of various African and Asian peoples to the United Kingdom. The historical emphasis on the integration of minority groups into a peacable whole within society, sometimes at the expense of their individuality has largely been replaced by a celebration of the wide spectrum of cultures within society whilst ensuring that the principles of equal opportunity and basic human rights of each are retained. The theory emphasizes three main aspects of community relations which should lead to reconciliation [6]:

- Improving communication and understanding between communities;
- Promoting a tolerant acceptance of existence of diversity of cultures and customs;
- Encouraging structures which safeguard the rights of all members of the society.

In principle, a two-stage approach is offered to meet the community needs and drive them towards reconciliation. The first of the two stages process of community develoment comprises the establishment of community development projects that serve several purposes. Such projects provide an opportunity for members of the community to meet, interact with each other and with other groups to achieve a common aim and in so doing build up confidence and social awareness. Furthermore, the process of decision-making embedded in the project can increase self confidence and strengthen belief in a more secure position in a community. The initial step would be to ensure that these community action groups come into existence to foster communication and insight so that the results can be taken forward through more formal community and government institutions. The subsequent step in a community relations process would normally involve contacts between different communities via discussions and joint actions. The core assumption is that functional cooperation around substantive matters can contribute to breakdown of negative images and reduce intergroup hostility and violence [7]. Hugh

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5 H.Frazer & M.Fitzduff, Improving Community Relations, Community Relations Council, CRC Pamphlet No. 3, 1994.; M.Fitzduff, Approaches to Community Relations, Community Relations Council, CRC Pamphlet No. 1, 1991.

6 M.H. Ross, 'Creating the conditions for peacemaking: theories of practice in ethnic conflict resolution', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol.23, Issue 6, 2000, pp. 1002-1034.

7 H.Frazer & M.Fitzduff, Improving Community Relations, Community Relations Council, CRC Pamphlet No. 3, 1994.; M.Fitzduff, Approaches to Community Relations, Community Relations Coun-

Frazer and Mari Fitzduff define the process as taking place in two stages only; however, the input of local institutions can be viewed as a third stage. This would be particularly relevant in the case of frozen conflicts that experience a plethora of input from every level from governmental and independent organisations, intermediaries and international leaders, all making efforts to resolve the problem. Eventually the theory offers eight areas to improve communication and understanding between the communities, such as mutual understanding work, anti-sectarian work, anti-intimidation work, cultural traditions, justice and rights, political options and inter-church work. However, the policy paper does not intend to apply all areas due to huge differences in scope and content of the frozen conflicts. It selectively opts for the most relevant areas, which needs greater attention from the international community and brings about fast and effective results.

The Transnistrian conflict

A conflict between Moldova and Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (PMR) arose in 1989 when Moldova passed a law banning the use of the Russian language. This affected up to a third of the country's population. It is interesting that in the PMR the Latin script for writing the language rather than the Cyrillic is taught in only six schools, a lack due perhaps to the Language Law of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic adopted on 8 September 1992, which actively discouraged Romanian as a language of instruction. Subsequently the teaching of Romanian in schools became a political act of defiance and in addition the government took steps to punish schools using the Romanian script as a demonstration of their authority. As a compromise the authorities of the Transnistrian region suggested that schools treat Romanian as a foreign language and teach it optionally like English or French. This proposal was rejected and at the present time a solution has been conciliated by the OSCE mission to Moldova whereby schools in Transnistria teaching in Moldovan are now classed as 'private institutions' supported financially by the Moldovan Ministry of Education. The OSCE attempted a further step towards acceptance in 2003 when it suggested that these schools were reclassified as public but this suggestion was firmly rejected. It is worth noting that 170 Moldovan parents and teachers forwarded a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2012 that Russia violated the right to education of the complainants and ordered it to pay over one million euros to the victims. In early 2014, the Transnistrian authorities froze the bank accounts of a Latin-script high school from Tiraspol and temporally detained the director and two of his colleagues, as well as six Moldovan peacekeepers who intervened during the

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cil, CRC Pamphlet No. 1, 1991.

incident [8]. Such incidents demonstrate that additional support and instruments for conflict settlement are in need. Community development is already supported by the free tuition and monthly scholarships awarded to Transinistrian university students following courses in Chisinau and by the system of mutual diploma recognition; it has been suggested that it might be furthered by internationally supported pupil exchange programmes that have in the past proved themselves to be an effective method of helping students to make contacts and communicate with pupils of their age in other countries.

Transnistria does not suffer particularly from a problem of freedom of movement as the region is centrally located with reasonably good transport links by bus and train with neighbouring countries such as Moldova and Ukraine. However, the isolationist policy of the region dictates that passports and all other important documents including school diplomas, military service records are only valid within Transnistrian borders. Given this restrictive set of regulations many citizens of PMR have found themselves obliged to adopt the the citizenship of a nearby country, usually that of Moldova, Ukraine or Russia. Entry into Transnistria can be hampered by unofficial border controls operated by unsanctioned personnel. Persons holding Transnistrian passports are largely unaffected, but foreigners and Moldovan citizens living on the west bank of the Dniestr river are required to complete a form, which states the purpose of their stay and the address of the person or institution hosting them - the process is tedious and occasionally disagreeable.

The Transnistrian economy was hard hit by the years of the 2008 global economic crisis and its financial recovery has been slower than that of Moldova. This can be explained by Transnistria's reliance on industrial exports produced by a small number of firms on whom the country's economy depends. Much of the economic growth in the area is due to the rise of the region's largest company, the Sheriff Holding Company. The European Union is now the major importer for these companies and others in the Transnistrian region. The territory has benefited from the EU's autonomous trade preferences that have made products from Transnistria (being exported to the EU as Moldovan products) more competitive on European markets [9]. An export based economy has the advantage of creating links with global economic markets, and a partnership with Chisinau is being promoted

to further this. Moreover, the Transnistrian economy is hampered by its inability to access international capital markets, as this means that Russia is their only source of foreign investment; many Transnistrian companies are taking steps to register themselves in Moldova's capital Chisinau so as to benefit from Moldova's growing links with the EU. In both Moldovia and Transnistria, there is a high dependency on remittances sent from people working abroad.

It has been found that international agencies have been of assistance in disputes in this region through the process of devising integration strategy plans and forecasting their comparative financial and social benefits. The EU is well placed to offer this expert support given its expertise in this area, and it might well be applied to encourage a partnership of projects for commercial enterprises on each side of the Nistru/Dniestr River. Such collaboration would enhance employment and benefit the economy in the area, which is in need of development and key infrastructure improvements.

The region needs to improve the concept of its society as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity, often termed the civil society. The civil society has a potentially important role in the resolution of conflicts in the Transnistrian region but its citizens are at the moment in need of education and information about the issues. It has been observed that the objectivity of media debates on the legal and political status of the area is compromised by ideological bias and that discussions are frequently lacking in quality and reliable facts. The European security watchdog OSCE could assist in this educational process via information about accepted procedures for conflict resolution as well as suggestions about how progress can be made towards finding solutions. This could be carried out via peer learning sessions and projects bringing together media professionals and those active in communities on both sides of the river in order to increase their mutual understanding.

Measures to improve the basic services and infrastructure in the troubled regions should be a priority as the water supply, health, education and social services provision is often poor, which can only exacerbate the problems in the area. An improvement in the standard of living for residents frees them to some extent from practical preoccupations and paves the way for a more positive approach to and engagement in conflict resolution. Practical infrastructure projects involving both communities can be a symbol of a joint local ownership of long-lasting improvements, with the accompanying feeling of confidence and achievement ; the success of these undertakings can also be a unifying force for populations and can enhance positive attitudes towards the OSCE.

8   Paul, I. Transnistria – Where to? European Policy Centre. 2014 March 13. <http://aei.pitt.edu/56457/1/pub_4257_transnistria_-_where_to.pdf>.

9   EU – UNDP Confidence Building Measures Increased opportunities and better living conditions across the Nistru/Dniestr River 2014 – 2017.

Finally, there is a need to capitalize on the role of the Orthodox Church. On the left bank of Nistru (Transnistria) the Church is aligned to the Moscow Patriarchy, whereas on the right bank two separate Orthodox churches are under the aegis of the Moscow and Romanian Patriarchies respectively. The benefits which could be accrued from the position and influence of the churches in the area have not been fully exploited as yet in the process of reconciliation. Religious festivals such as Easter and Christmas could provide a setting for community reunion and peace.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

The early April clash between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2016 was the bloodiest since Russia brokered a cease-fire between the countries to end the fighting in the region. The fighting in April left some 30 people, soldiers and civilians, dead[10]. Tensions and violence over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) had escalated in January 2014 as well, with a number of incidents between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces at the line of contact. The dramatic upsurge of incidents and irreconcilable positions between the two Caucasian neighbours made it clear that the region is neither at peace nor stable, therefore additional measures should be undertaken to curb volatile actions and provide a final solution for reconciliation [11].

Given the scale of the community divisions in this conflict, it is quite difficult to enviseage solutions within the framework of the community relations theory. However, the common Caucasian identity of the people in the area and some shared economic and cultural aims might provide a starting point for certain conflict resolution measures. Peaceful coexistence of the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan has proved to be impossible for so many years that it is hard to imagine a situation in which Armenians might be able to return to Baku and Barda or the Azeris could inhabit Yerevan or Stepanakert - this aim might be excessively idealistic in the current climate. Nevertheless, some initiatives should be set in motion to increase contact between these troubled communities, and discussions on ways of promoting the positive factors of a common Caucasian identity in the region could be sponsored by the OSCE and the EU. Additionally, the ever present human motivation to trade and make mon-

ey could usefully be exploited in the regional business and economic field with the added bonus of the friendly contacts that might ensue. As an initial step, trade spots could be set up along the border between NG and Azerbaijan - based on the example of Ergneti in the case of the Georgia and South Ossetia conflict - supported by the establishment of Free Trade Zones in the region and infrastructure projects involving the cooperation of business and civil groups from both communities. These projects would automatically increase personal contacts and as a result, it is hoped, would involve the civil society in setting up a conversation between the two communities on how peaceful reconciliation might be achieved.

It might even be possble to set up temporary administrative bodies to jointly manage certain projects in the area such as the use of the rivers or even a joint medical and health service for the NK and area, based on the region rather than nationality.These bodies would share a common interest in the promotion of benefits for the local area and operate with joint authority. This would require the relaxation of certain border regulations producing associated favourable developments.

The province of Lachin is well placed for bridging initiatives between the two communities. Firstly, it is geographically well located with the potential for a road offering multiple useful connections for both nations. This could provide a corridor to link Azeris living in Nakhchivan region with the rest of Azerbaijan, and also a politically significant route to the Karabakh border for Armenia. A joint draft proposal for the construction of the infrastructure for this corridor could unite the three groups that would benefit: the Azeris from Nakhchivan region, Armenians from Megri, Kafan and Goris provinces and the community of Lachin itself; it would constitute a powerful political tool for reconciliation.

The Nagorno-Karabakh political and military conflict between Armenian and Azeri people has exerted a manipulative effect even on the domestic policies of the two nations. There is no particular reason for mutual hatred as the two communities have coexisted peacefully in the past just as they live peacably with Georgia at the moment. A new generation has not lived through the atrocities committed in previous decades and to some extent their mutual prejudices have been artificially created by each government. Moves to reconcile the two communities could take the form of a range of activities designed to strengthen the common Caucasian identity of the peoples, such as educational visits and cultural events and NGO projects shared by each community. The province of Shusha could provide a focus for unity as it is culturally significant for both the Azeri and Armenian states who share its heritage. The province might be the ideal

10 L.A. Altstadt, R. Menon, 'Unfrozen Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Why Violence Persists', *Foreign Affairs,* 2016 <www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/armenia/2016-04-12/unfrozen-conflict-nagorno-karabakh>.

11 Y.Hirose, G. Jasutis, 'Analyzing the Upsurge of Violence and Mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict', *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development,* Vol.3, No. 1, 2014, pp.1-18.

setting for the performance of traditional music such as Azeri *mugham* and Armenian *duduk*, and cultural and educational tours have been enviseaged in which two guides, one from each country, lead groups of mixed Azeri and Armenian visitors. Plans also include the joint celebration of world events such as *International Women's Day*. These plans are all designed to emphasize the value of two cultures that have been unified by history in this region and to encourage personal contact and communication.

The conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia

The Georgian and South Ossetian/Abkhazian conflicts have been often mercurial over the last twenty years, fluctuating between peaceful moments and high-intensity crises that left thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons, destroyed infrastructure, economy, trade and social life, and killed and maimed inhabitants in the area. It has been eight years since the 2008 war, which reached the critical peak again after the 1991-1993 crisis and 2004 bloody strife, reminded the international community of the fragile and vibrant situation in South Caucasus [12]. South Ossetia and Abkhazia have introduced multiple processes of borderization, fencing, passportization, restriction of freedom of movement, and security measures, which further drove a wedge in a Georgian, South Ossetian and Abkhazian relationship. The build-up of trust and tolerance should start from Akhagori and Gali regions.

Freedom of movement issue should be placed first on the agenda of international community. It is suggested to start with mutual understanding work, which seeks to bring communities closer focusing on establishing contacts and sharing the information between communities' members. The current border-crossing procedure has allowed most residents from the Akhalgori/Gali districts to travel across the ABL with limited restrictions. This measure of freedom helps to maintain the social ties and share of the information. It is widely recognized that there are some obstacles related to security actors that hinder freedom of movement and reduce a possibility to intensify the contacts between the communities. The containment and transparency of security actors in Gali and Akhalgori remain one of the most important issues to be addressed. The radical reform of security institutions and the introduction of a new style of policing is often a prerequisite to achieving and maintaining the resolution of conflicts. Such reform aims to transform

the structure and purpose of these institutions in keeping with the needs of a durable peace settlement. After 2008 war, there are Russian Border Guards, Russian Armed forces, South Ossetian/Abkhazian Police and South Ossetian/Abkhazian KGB in the regions. While the RF Border guard service seemed to be professional, the security actors representing de facto authorities tended to be overwhelmingly involved in criminal activities and policed in the interests of one group to the exclusion of others. Direct involvement in military operations and strong show-off of force were rooted deeply in the security system. There is a fundamental need to facilitate the contacts between security actors and commuters to make sure individuals do not face security problems and any kind of discrimination.

It was worth mentioning the cultural traditions work. Both Georgian, South Ossetian and Abkhazian communities cohabited and shared some cultural elements and customs due to geographical proximity, history and Caucasian identity. It would be suggested to organize joint events to commemorate cultural holidays from both sides. For example, 15th of October is Birthday of Famous Ossetian Poet Kosta Khetagurov, 15th of May is Day of Ossetian Language and Literature. A thorough assessment of famous Abkhazian poet Bagrat Shinkuba can be done by both Georgian and Abkhazian experts. Similar Georgian holidays should be commemorated in South Ossetia and Abkhazia as well. It can be ensured through legislation and guaranteed to support cultural confidence building projects that may well lead to organizing various events for historians who can share their different viewpoints and arrive at conclusions satisfying the interests of both sides. Various publications, seminars, dance and song festivals would support reconciliation and improve communication between the communities.

Justice and rights work always remains very complicated, emotional and not easy going because it triggers fates of conflict of an affected population. In this case the media should take its role to inform the public and to be a watchdog of the peace process. The website can be created to provide the information on the reconciliation process, which will include stories of various victims, information of particular interest to the media and locals, such as press releases, issue papers, and links to publications, board agendas, and other documents on the website. Radio and TV broadcasting could be organized where a victim and perpetrator have a tête-à-tête meeting and openly tell what has happened during the conflict. There are a number of cases on property rights and confiscations that have been recorded by international communities and presented in Geneva discussions. This should be addressed through local and international

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12 G. Jasutis, 'Forward-looking solutions for the Georgian and South Ossetian conflict: a path towards reconciliation', *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics,* Vol. 6, No. 2, 2013, pp. 24-49.

channels to make sure that justice and rule of law prevails.

The role of inter-church work should be seriously considered. Both Ossetian and Georgian communities are Orthodox, while Abkhaz people are divided into Orthodox and Muslim Sunni communities. The Abkhazian and South Ossetian orthodox dioceses de jure belong to the canonical territory of the Georgian Orthodox Church, ecclesiastical rule from Tbilisi has not been de facto carried out for many years. The Russian Church recognizes the canonical territory of the Georgian Church, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia [13]. It is important to note that the Orthodox Church remains the most trusted institution in Georgia and traditionally the surveys carried out by the Caucasus Resource Research Center show that 95% of respondents have a favorable opinion of its work[14]. Patriarch Ilia's influence in Georgia is unprecedented and he supports restoration of the relationship between the communities. His role would be more beneficial in order to achieve a level of tolerance and introduce cooperation with South Ossetia. He was born in Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia), graduated from high school there and his spiritual father was the Ossetian, Father Mikhail Dzatsoev. His experience and positive attitude should be employed and used to the full extent possible. Joint religious discussions, church services, visiting prayer groups and preaches from other churches, joint social activities (i.e. charity event) should be strong appropriate actions leading the communities towards the understanding and communication.

The international community should do its best to support sustainable reconciliation. International organizations, such as the OSCE, European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, EU Delegation in Georgia, UN office in Georgia possess substantial political and administrative resources to support the dialogue between the communities. It is noteworthy to highlight the fragile nature of local civil society, and to call for greater intervention and support for local NGOs. Gali and Akhalgori communities are often marginalized from mainstream NGO support, and call for deeper engagement. Local NGOs working with conflict-resolution and the IDP communities need professional and structural development support. To avoid inaccurate representations of the conflict and the aftermath, third parties need to facilitate meetings between the governmental agencies and NGOs. The development of social institutions (sport clubs, discussion

forums, cultural houses) between Georgia and South Ossetia/Abkhazia communities should be started and some funding should be allocated. New business initiative would support a concept of intensified relations between the communities. International projects on skills development, small-business training and financial support, and advanced labor technology can be organized and supported in Georgia and South Ossetia/Abkhazia to create a link between the communities.

Concluding remarks

This policy paper assessed a potential of activities to be employed by the international community towards improving communication and understanding between communities and promoting a tolerant acceptance of existence of diversity of cultures and customs in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh. The conflicts and their intensity vary and the contention stems from different roots. It precludes from crafting a single model applicable in all frozen conflicts, though some activities may contribute to the community development.

The European security watchdog OSCE could assist in educational process via information about accepted procedures for conflict resolution as well as suggestions about how progress can be made towards solutions. This could be carried out via peer learning sessions and projects bringing together media professionals, students, NGOs and those active opinion leaders in communities in order to increase their mutual understanding.

In all frozen conflicts' areas, the water supply, health, education, and social services provision is often poor, which can only exacerbate the problems in the area and any improvement made by the international community would pave the way for a more positive approach to and engagement in conflict resolution. Practical infrastructure projects involving both communities can be a symbol of a joint local ownership of long-lasting improvements, with the accompanying feeling of confidence and achievement ; the success of these undertakings can also be a unifying force for populations. In case of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria, pupil exchange programmes, partnership of projects for commercial enterprises on each side, joint training offices would encourage people-to-people contacts and would increase their tolerance. Such projects would be further supported through inter-church and cultural traditional work.

Given the scale of the community divisions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, it is quite difficult to enviseage instruments for reconciliation. Nevertheless, the common Caucasian identity of the people in the area and some shared economic and cultural aims might provide a

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13 Georgian patriarchy refuses to recognize Abkhaz Orthodox Church. 2009-09-16 <http://sputniknews.com/world/20090916/156147781.html#ixzz4Bq3IdmG4>.

14 Georgia's mighty Orthodox Church. <www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-23103853>.

starting point for some conflict resolution measures. The province of Shusha could provide a focus for unity as it is culturally significant for both the Azeri and Armenian states who share its heritage. The province might be the ideal setting for the performance of traditional music such as Azeri *mugham* and Armenian *duduk*.

In general, it would be suggested to employ an "intense contacts approach" based on development aid and interaction to ensure communication channels with de facto authorities in order to solve all questions stemming from community needs, to support NGO sector working on confidence building on both sides, to develop and maintain arrangements for funding of initiatives aimed at starting, developing and sustaining reconciliation process, and to mainstream human rights and gender issues.

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