

Nataliia Nechaieva-Yuriichuk

Chernivtsi, Ukraine

Revanchism as a state strategy of the Russian Federation: reflections on the tragic anniversary of the Transnistrian conflict

On March 4-5, 2022, the online conference "Transnistrian War of 1992: 30 Years Later" took place in Chisinau (Republic of Moldova), which was attended by representatives of various countries, including Ukraine

The collapse of the USSR was the biggest defeat for Moscow in modern times. From the very beginning of the process of defragmentation of the Soviet system until today, the capital of the former superpower is trying to restore its position in the world politics. Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia are a non-exhaustive list of “hot spots” created by Russia, which later grew into “frozen conflicts which are influencing on the system of international relations and international security. This year is the year of 30 years since the end of the active phase of the Transnistrian conflict. And just before this tragic anniversary, the Russian Federation launched a new war - the war with Ukraine, which is carried out in the neighbouring state, like the war of thirty years ago.

The emergence of the Transnistrian conflict, its evolution, the negotiation process and the further development of the situation in the region have become a litmus test of the intentions and actions of the Russian Federation towards the former Soviet republics. However, in the early 1990^s, Moscow felt too weak to pursue an openly aggressive policy toward neighbouring states. Thus, Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova became the platform on which algorithms of

interaction with regional elites, means of escalation of the conflict, “negotiation process” were “worked out”. During the suggested by Moscow algorithm Russian Federation, which was de facto a party to the conflict, de jure became a “mediator” and “peacekeeper”, as evidenced by the Agreement on the Principles of Settlement of the Conflict in Transnistria between the Presidents of Moldova M. Snegur and President of Russia B. Yeltsin. Under the 1992 agreements, the parties recognized Moldova's territorial integrity and Transnistria's right to “decide its own destiny” if Moldova would like to change its state status. Accordingly, Moldova must maintain its declared neutral status without joining military-political alliances (NATO) under any circumstances, otherwise the slow-moving mine in the form of Transnistria will work and destroy the fragile peace that was established in the early 1990s.

It seems like Russia has tried to implement a similar scenario in Ukraine: from the provoked Crimean crisis in 1994 to the blatant violation of the territorial integrity and state sovereignty of Ukraine. The war, launched by Russia in 2014, was a clear manifestation of Moscow's desire to transform Ukraine into another, much larger Moldova - with violated state sovereignty, lost territories and the inability to join the North Atlantic Alliance. In fact, Moscow attempted to replicate a time-tested algorithm: inciting and supporting self-proclaimed separatist enclaves that are not internationally recognized (even by Russia) but are a constant zone of instability and a threat to national government. Moreover, despite the lightning speed of the decision to include Crimea in Russia, primarily due to military-strategic considerations, Transnistria, like the so-called LNR and DNR for a long time, has not received recognition of its independence (despite the official appeal in April 2014 to the State Duma of the Russian Federation).

In the realities of post-2014, Transnistria has in fact become a “trump card” of the Kremlin, which is trying to maintain its influence in Moldova, largely in Ukraine and the EU. In its full-scale offensive against Ukraine, which Moscow launched on February 24, 2022, the main blows were inflicted by Russia and Belarus, but Transnistria remains an additional threat not only to Ukraine and

Ukrainians, but to Europe as a whole. It is the centre of pro-Russian forces in central Europe during the war in the neighbouring Ukraine.

The application of the Republic of Moldova for EU membership on March 3 return to the life the traditional algorithm of Russia: the intensification of the European integration course by the Republic of Moldova has led to a new escalation of separatist sentiments of Transnistrians, whose government is already demanding recognition of independence from Moldova , OSCE, etc. The question is: how does this differ from the situation with the so-called DNR and LNR, which have demanded recognition of their “independence” with the support of Moscow thus destroying the foundations of Ukrainian statehood? And if Europeans think that the situation is far from them, it is worth remembering Brexit in 2016, the referendum on Catalonia's independence in 2017 and the Russian trace in these events. And how then did European states react to Russia's interference in their internal affairs?!

Of course, the sign of equality between all these conflicts can not to be put. However, we witness the use of a single, well-established algorithm by the Russian authorities: provocations of political divisions, comprehensive support for separatist movements and enclaves based on them, active military intervention (in the post-Soviet space) and the desire to act as a “peacekeeper” in the conflict process. Regardless of technology, Moscow's main goal is to split the democratic world and establish its dominance over as much territory as possible.

On our view, today, Russia is implementing a policy of “land return”. And Ukraine is not the ultimate goal of the aggressor. An analysis of statements by Russia's official institutions shows that the Kremlin seeks to regain its own dominance, at least as it was at the mid-1990^s, as evidenced by [Putin's comments on NATO's response to security guarantees on February 1 this year](#). And it is worth to pay attention [to the threats about the possible accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO and the promise from Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova “steps in response to our country”?](#)

In this context, only one question arises: who can be the next in this revanchist logic of the destruction and destruction of the statehood of a number of independent states and peace in Europe, if not to defend Ukraine? And statements by the Russian Foreign Ministry, in which Moscow warns that all cases of [“unprecedented levels of Russophobia observed in a number of foreign countries in the context of a special military operation in Ukraine”](#) are carefully recorded is, in our opinion, a direct voice of the Kremlin's far-reaching plans.