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## **EFFECTS OF REGIONAL PARTY STRUCTURES ON BUILDING UNRECOGNIZED STATES: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TRANSNISTRIA AND CRIMEA**

Why some regions become unrecognized states, while the other do not? This article tries to explain the reason for building unrecognized states, using comparative analysis of Transnistria and Crimea during the dissolution of the USSR. Although both cases were similar in the point of social conditions, time span and geographical location, Transnistria decided to leave Moldova, Crimea chose to be autonomy within Ukraine. Focusing on the regional party structures, this article shows that Transnistrian corporate professional associations enhanced the capacity of autonomous decision-making, while the Crimean party organization restricted autonomous behavior. The finding implies that different party structures could effect upon whether unrecognized states build or not.

*Key words:* Unrecognized State, Regional Party, Comparative Analysis, Transnistria, Crimea.

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## **ВПЛИВ РЕГІОНАЛЬНИХ ПАРТІЙНИХ СТРУКТУР НА РОЗБУДОВУ НЕВИЗНАНИХ ДЕРЖАВ: ПОРІВНЯЛЬНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ПРИДНІСТРОВ'Я ТА КРИМУ**

Чому певні регіони перетворюються у невизнані держави, в той час як інші – ні? У цій статті зроблено спробу пояснити причини виникнення невизнаних держав, використовуючи метод компаративного аналізу у випадку Придністров'я та Криму після розпаду Радянського Союзу. Хоча

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обидва випадки були подібними за соціальними умовами, часовими проміжками та географічним розташуванням, Придністров'я вирішило залишити Молдову, тоді як Крим обрав автономію у складі України. З огляду на регіональні партійні структури, в цій статті показано, що придністровські корпоративні професійні асоціації підвищили спроможність самостійного прийняття рішень, тоді як партійна організація в Криму обмежила автономну поведінку. У висновках зазначено, що різні партійні структури можуть впливати на те, чи створюються невизнані держави, чи ні.

*Ключові слова:* невизнана держава, регіональна партія, компаративний аналіз, Придністров'я, Крим.

**Problem Definition.** The unrecognized states in the Black Sea Region have held the attention of many scholars. Ukraine crisis in 2014 gave birth to the new unrecognized states, located in Luhans'k and Donets'k Regions.

On the other hand, the old ones were born from the dissolution of the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Transnistria claimed independence from their respective republics. These regions have claimed to be independent states, but have failed to gain international recognition [1, p. 11]. They have become unrecognized states. At the same time, there were some regions, which did not become unrecognized state.

This article tries to explain the reason for building unrecognized states, using comparative analysis of Transnistria and Crimea during the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although two cases were much similar in the point of ethnic composition, time span and geographical location, Transnistria decided to leave Moldova, Crimea chose to be an autonomous republic within Ukraine. Previous studies have analyzed the formation of unrecognized states, focusing on Russian intervention, the historical division, economic wealth, and so forth. However, the divergence between Transnistrian separation and Crimean autonomy was not decisive from the beginning. Both regions initially had demanded for being an autonomous republic within the union republic. As the confrontations between Moldova and Transnistria deepened, Transnistria had an idea about separation from Moldova. On the other hand, Crimean regional committee elaborated a plan for the reinstatement of the autonomous republic with the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, invoking the Crimean Tatars' right of repatriation

as a rationale for the recreation of the autonomous republic. It needs to analyze not only structural factors, but also actor's interaction.

Drawing upon the role of regional party, the author tries to explain the reason why Transnistria decided to leave Moldova, while Crimea chose to be an autonomous republic within Ukraine in the era of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It concludes that the different structures of regional party could effect on whether unrecognized states have been built or not.

**Analysis of Previous Studies.** Why some regions become unrecognized states, while the other do not? What causes the regions to separate from a state? Many scholars have emphasized external intervention. For example, Russia supported the separatist movements and deployed peacekeeping forces for political reasons [2–5]. In case of Transnistria, the strategic cooperation between Russia and Transnistria caused to the violent conflict. Hale indicated that Russian separation from the USSR, which he called as “a core ethnic region”, broke up the Soviet Union and encouraged the regions to the further session. According to him, “a core ethnic region” tends (1) to promote dual power, (2) to reduce central government's credibility for the security of ethnic minority, and (3) to facilitate the collective imagining of each state to separate from the union state [6].

Although the Russian role is a key factor to explain Transnistria's separation, it could not sufficiently explain why the Crimean leaders chose to be an autonomous republic within Ukraine during the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Crimea was also a strategic region for the Russian government. However, Crimea did not separate from Ukraine during the dissolution of the USSR.

The historical cleavage is another unrecognized state-building explanation. Lynch said that Transnistrian elites were traditionally Russophone and had the fear to be assimilated by the Moldavian authorities. Some scholars pointed out that most Dniestrian have a keen sense of a regional identity and an attachment to Dniester-Soviet values [7, p. 301; 8, p. 148]. Although the Moldovan Democratic Republic decided to unify with Romania, the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), which was located in Transnistria, had been established from 1924 to 1940. Many scholars observed that the old autonomy promoted Transnistrian elites to separate from the Moldavian SSR [9; 10, p. 225; 11, p. 56].

However, there was also historical cleavage between Ukraine and Crimea. The Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) had been established within the Russian republic in 1921. And also Russian residents are majoritarian ethnic group in Crimea. Despite the regional cleavage and ethnic composition, Crimean leaders did not choose separation from Ukraine during the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The factor of regional identity could not explain the difference between Transnistria and Crimea sufficiently.

The last, but not least is economic resources. Transnistria was a heavy industrial district. Transnistrian elites enjoyed using economic resources for their prosperity [12–13]. On the other hand, Crimea had not such resources and economically depended on Kiev [14]. Although Transnistria's economic resources helped make separation possible, Crimean separation was much less likely.

However, the divergence of both regions was not decisive from the start. Because Transnistria's leaders desired an autonomous republic within Moldova at the beginning, the economic factor is not sufficient to explain for why some regions become unrecognized states, while the other do not. It needs to look through the not only structural factors, but also actor's interaction.

**Formulation of the Purpose.** For explaining the difference of both regions, this article examines the effect of regional party structures on the divergence of building Transnistrian unrecognized state and Crimean autonomy. The party structure is an important factor for state building, because it regulates internal order and preserves it [15, p. 408]. Although historical backgrounds, time span, and geographic location were similar in case of Crimea and Transnistria, the regional party structures were much different.

Igor Smirnov, who was the chairman of city council in Tiraspol, was a leader in Transnistria. He led to separation from Moldova. His organizational basis was the United Work Collective Council, known by its Russian acronym OSTK (Ob'edinennyi Soyuz Trudovykh Kollektivov). The OSTK was born from the economic reforms in the Soviet Union, which Mikhail Gorbachev had implemented. Because the organization was composed of the work collectives, they were essentially corporate professional associations. In response to the

issues over the official language of Moldova, the organization became regional political party. Although the gorkom and raikom officially had a responsibility for preserving social order in the territory, OSTK captured the state institutions in Transnistria. OSTK operated as the decision-making body for Transnistrian separation. They bestowed an autonomous decision-making ability on I. Smirnov in Transnistria.

On other hands, Mykola Bahrov was a leader in Crimea and chose to be autonomy within Ukraine. His organizational basis was the Crimean regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. He was the first secretary of the Crimean obkom. In the part of case study, the author draws on the regional committee restricting the separation from Ukraine.

### **The Main Content**

#### **The Formation of OSTK in Transnistria**

When the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev started his political reform in 1987, the language question initially represented an issue for Communist Party of Moldova under its First Secretary – Simon Grossu [16, p. 258]. The questions of the Moldovan state languages were crucial for Transnistria, because many Russian speakers lived there. OSTK was formed under such kind a situation [17, p. 6–7]. OSTK was composed of work collectives within each company, and born from the economic reforms in the Soviet Union. OSTK was essentially an economic and political organization self-managed by work collectives. Their members could decide the representatives of work collectives [18]. In other words, OSTK was corporate professional associations. On the other hand, town communist party organization, headed by gorkom and raikom, had a responsibility for preserving public order in Transnistria [19, p. 115]. However, as many political reforms had progressed in Moldova, they could not control the tense situation in Transnistria. As town communist organization had weakened, a republican OSTK captured the political resources in Transnistria.

OSTK implemented many strikes against the language law in Tiraspol, calling for the participation of work collectives. This organization paid for worker's salaries during the implementation of the strike. Thus, they could easily mobilize the citizens of each town in Transnistria. OSTK was also formed in other cities [20]. Each OSTK gathered at Tiraspol and decided implementing the strike against language laws together. Transnistrian republican OSTK has

been established. At the same time, many party members decided the participation into the republican OSTK.

Although the protest movements had been enlarged in Transnistria, the language laws were enacted in the Moldavian Supreme Soviet. The republican OSTK demanded those laws lapse. They also decided on the establishment of regional autonomy within Moldavian SSR [18].

### **Intensification of the conflict between Moldova and Transnistria**

The government in Chisinau tried to stop Transnistrian protests and negotiated with activists in Transnistria. However, the declaration, in which Moldova regarded the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact as invalid, led the relationship between Moldova and Transnistria to deteriorate. Historically, Transnistria had been faced with the invasion by the Romanian army, and inhabitants had felt hostile toward Romania. The Kirov factory in Tiraspol expressed their opinion on the invalidity of Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and made a public announcement about implementation of the second conference in Transnistria [21]. Six hundred thirty-six deputies from cities, districts, and villages gathered at Tiraspol. They decided building Transnistrian republic within SSR. The government in Chisinau rejected that declaration.

When the new treaty on union was announced, Transnistrian government argued for USSR referendum. The republican OSTK hoped for the preservation of the Soviet Union. They argued that the Transnistrian republic has new status within the Soviet Union. The Transnistrian Supreme Soviet decided on the ratification of the new treaty on union. The republican OSTK also decided on a national flag, a Memorial Day, and a national anthem. Although the coup was a complete failure in Moscow and Moldova declared independence from the Soviet Union, a republican OSTK continued insisting on preserving the Soviet Union. For Transnistria's elites, the Soviet Union continued to exercise supervision over Transnistria's territory.

### **Building Unrecognized State**

From March 1992, violent conflict occurred between Moldova and Transnistria. Combat in the cities of Dubasari and Bender was large-scale [16, p. 250]. The intervention of the Russian army affected the consequences of Transnistrian conflict. Russian soldiers not only intervene in the conflict, but also support military training for work

collectives in Transnistria. The republican OSTK and Transnistrian President I. Smirnov gave Russian incentives for intervention. For example, Transnistrian government established a social and cultural institution for soldiers [17, p. 6–7]. After the conflict, A. Lebed', who was a commander in Bender, became a member of Transnistrian Diet. The republican OSTK also mobilized the citizens for military training for workers in Transnistria, paying for salary. Although Moldova did not control the region of Transnistria, Russian government had mediated the violent conflict. Transnistria has become an unrecognized state since then.

### **Early Sign of building Crimean Autonomy**

While Transnistria separated from independent Moldova, the developments in Crimea proceeded along a different path. Crimean status had been upgraded from oblast to autonomous republic during the disintegration of the Soviet Union. An early sign of building Crimean autonomy was shown by the USSR Supreme Soviet, when it recognized Crimean Tatars' returnees to Crimea [22].

Historically, Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) had been established within the Russia in 1921. Crimean Tartars, considered to be indigenous people, or *korinnyi narod*, held the top leadership position in the Crimean ASSR until the close of the World War II, when Soviet authorities identified Crimean Tatars as a nation of traitors to the Soviet Union. The Crimean status was downgraded to an ordinary oblast within Russia, according to the deportation of Crimean Tatars from Crimea to Central Asia. Crimea had been transferred from Russia to Ukraine. After Khrushchev's speech, Crimean Tatars had held meetings in Central Asia and wrote many letters to communist party, demanding for the repatriation to Crimea and revival of an old autonomous republic [23–24]. However, Soviet authorities did not meet their demands.

*Perestroika* broke the deadlock in this situation and paved a way for rebuilding the Crimean autonomy. The USSR Supreme Soviet granted Crimean Tatars the right to return to Crimea and even contemplated the re-establishment of the Crimean ASSR.

### **Crimean government and building autonomy**

In these situations, Crimean Regional Committee internally discussed about Crimean legal status [25]. The party organization established the committee, which was composed of the history and law study groups. They investigated all the pros and cons of upgrading the

Crimean status. Leonid Grach, the second secretary of Crimean Regional committee, was a chairman of the committee for upgrading the Crimean status. A scholar on law said that the demand for alteration of the status was legal act, because USSR government had permitted the right of Crimean Tatars. A scholar on history insisted that Crimea was a multi-ethnic region and should not build monolithic ethnic autonomous republic. Based on the investigation of the committee, the Crimean local government created a policy stating it was necessary for the recovery of Crimean Tatars' returnees to reestablish the autonomous republic. They also decided on implementing referendum around the reestablishment of the autonomy [Ibid].

After that, the Crimean oblast council held a meeting on November 1990. M. Bahrov, who was an also the first secretary in Crimean regional committee, decided on implementing the referendum around the upgrading status from oblast to autonomous republic within the SSR. Although the referendum was not specified in what republic do Crimea belong to, the Crimean government did not try to bring up the jurisdiction between Russia and Ukraine. Differ from Transnistria, they did not demand for the Union government and the Ukrainian government that Crimea become a federal republic. Crimean regional committee only claimed to become an autonomous republic [22].

The referendum was held in January 1991. The Crimean government got 93% support from Crimean residents. The results were immediately conveyed to the Union and the Ukrainian government. L. Kravchuk recognized the formation of the Crimean autonomous republic within the Ukrainian SSR. The multi-ethnic Crimean autonomy was reestablished within the Ukrainian SSR.

### **The jurisdiction over Crimea**

There was another aspect of Crimean autonomy that was not addressed – the jurisdiction over Crimea between Russia and Ukraine. Especially, Russian-speakers insisted on the transference from Ukraine to Russia. However, the referendum did not ask whether Crimea belongs to Ukraine or Russia. In the referendum, it had been written only word “Crimean ASSR in the Soviet Union” [26]. M. Bahrov wanted to escape from the controversy around the problem of transference. B. Yeltsin and L. Kravchuk confirmed Sovereignty declaration each other and reached an agreement with preserving the border between two countries within the Soviet Union [27]. Bahrov was an established soviet politician, like



Kravchuk and Lukyanov. He tried to changing Crimean status, based on the legal procedures.

Although the tension between Russia and Ukraine about the jurisdiction over Crimea was erupted after Ukraine's independent declaration from the USSR, Bahrov thought it was necessary to discuss its status with both Ukraine and Russia. Kravchuk tried to persuade the local population to stay with Ukraine by promising an overall development of the autonomous republic [28–29]. In the end, Crimea did not leave the independent Ukraine but remained within its borders until 2014.

#### Conclusion and Prospects for Further Research

Focusing on the role of regional parties, the article tries to explain the reason why Crimea chose to be an autonomous republic within Ukraine, while Transnistria decided to leave Moldova during the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In case of Transnistria, OSTK was a regional party. The organization was essentially the corporate professional association. As the confrontation between Chisinau and Tiraspol escalated, OSTK captured the state institutions, political and economic resources from the gorkom and raikom in Transnistria. The republican OSTK operated as the decision-making body for Transnistrian separation. In other words, the corporate professional association enhanced the capacity of I. Smirnov to choose Transnistria's separation from Moldova.

On the other hand, the Crimean regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine was a party in Crimea. Mykola Bahrov was Crimean leader and was the first secretary of the Crimean obkom. The regional committee elaborated a plan for the reinstatement of the autonomous republic and took the initiative for its materialization. Invoking the Crimean Tatars' right of repatriation as a rationale for the recreation of the autonomous republic, Bahrov negotiated his plan with Leonid Kravchuk. Crimea did not leave the independent Ukraine but remained within its borders until 2014. The Crimean communist party organization restricted the autonomous behavior of Bahrov.

In sum, Transnistrian corporate professional associations enhanced the capacity of Transnistrian autonomous decision-making, while the Crimean communist party organization restricted autonomous behavior of the leader. This finding implies that the different regional

party structures could effect upon whether unrecognized states have been built or not. We reserve the task, which examines the other cases, for future.

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