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The threat degree of *de facto* states for international security

A case study of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia

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ABSTRACT:

De facto states are underrated phenomena in the International Relations field. When they are analyzed, they are mainly considered in the light of the historical context under which they start to exist, under the light of their internal organization, or the light of their relationship with the other actors involved in the so-called "frozen conflict". However, few attempts were made to assert *de facto* states in the context of regional and international security. In trying to do so, I would like to analyze if *de facto* states are or not posing threats to the regional and international *status quo* in their region. The assessment of *de facto* states will be made through mainly five different fields: general criminality in their territories, aggravated criminality in their territories, terroristic cells present in them, the forced migration caused by the conflict that created *de facto* states, and lastly, the possibility of a war restarting. In this thesis, I will consider specifically the cases of three different *de facto* states to assess international threats to international security that they pose: the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

Keywords: TRNC, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, security

SUMMARY IN ITALIAN

I così detti stati *de facto* sono uno degli aspetti più interessanti nell'ambito delle Relazioni Internazionali. Questi territori non vengono riconosciuti dalla comunità internazionale, sebbene molti di essi possano contare su tutti i requisiti necessari per essere riconosciuti ai sensi del diritto internazionale, codificati nel diritto consuetudinario all'interno della Convenzione di Montevideo sui Diritti e Doveri degli Stati del Dicembre 1933.

Nella maggior parte dei casi gli stati *de facto* nascono a partire da un movimento secessionista, il quale può portare a un conflitto contro lo stato a cui questi territori appartengono, per motivi che vanno dalla richiesta di maggiore autonomia, o a frizioni etniche interne che non trovano una soluzione. Dal momento in cui uno stato *de facto* si autoproclama indipendente, le reazioni della comunità internazionale spesso sono tre: forte opposizione con introduzione di sanzioni e embargo, l'ignorare della loro esistenza, e la così detta "approccio di accettazione limitata". Gli attori che ruotano attorno gli stati

de facto sono quattro: l'élite secessionista, lo state da cui la secessione è avvenuta, il partner chiave, e la comunità internazionale, come le Nazioni Unite o le organizzazioni internazionali come l'Unione Europea.

Per questa tesi e la ricerca che ho condotto mi sono focalizzato su tre paesi *de facto*: la Repubblica Turca di Cipro del Nord, l'Abkhazia e l'Ossezia del Sud. In questo elaborato ho proposto una comparazione tra questi tre stati non riconosciuti, per cercare di individuare se essi siano o meno un pericolo per la sicurezza internazionale.

Nel corso del primo capitolo prettamente teorico, ho considerato due concetti base dell'ambito delle Relazioni Internazionali, quali la sovranità e la sicurezza. Partendo dalle loro definizioni mi sono poi concentrato sulla spiegazione di come questi due concetti non siano immobili e insindacabili, ma possano essere strumentalizzati dai *policy maker*. Successivamente, ho analizzato le principali caratteristiche degli stati *de facto*. Questi ultimi sono stati categorizzati in quattro categorie differenti: quelli che ancora esistono, quelli che sono stati re-incorporati nello stato "nativo", sia in modo coercitivo, sia in modo pacifico, infine coloro che hanno avuto la possibilità di diventare stati sovrani. Infine, ho esaminato le entità che ruotano attorno questi territori: lo stato da cui è avvenuta la secessione, l'élite secessionista, il partner chiave, e la comunità internazionale.

Il secondo capitolo è servito per poter concentrarmi prettamente sui tre stati *de facto* in questione. Ho definito le relazioni che intercorrono tra i tre stati *de facto* con gli stati sovrani dai cui si sono separati, con gli stati partner, ovvero coloro che aiutano in maniera più massiccia la loro sopravvivenza, e con la comunità internazionale. Successivamente ho analizzato la composizione etnica dei territori *de facto*, con un focus particolare sui periodi pre-conflitto e post-conflitto. Infine, ho analizzato gli avvenimenti chiave a livello storico e diplomatico che hanno portato ai conflitti in quelle zone, alla nascita degli stati *de facto* e alla situazione odierna.

Il terzo capitolo si pone come punto focale della mia ricerca. Al proprio interno, il terzo capitolo contiene valutazioni sui singoli stati *de facto* in merito al pericolo che essi rappresentano o potrebbero rappresentare per la sicurezza internazionale. Per far ciò mi sono servito di cinque differenti ambiti di valutazione di pericolo. Il primo riguarda l'ambito della criminalità generale, ovvero rispetto a qualsiasi bene che non riesca ad essere tassato da uno stato sovrano. Il secondo analizza la diffusione della della criminalità "aggravata", che comprende vendita di armi, traffico di droghe o di esseri

umani. Il terzo ha riguardato la valutazione dei legami che gli stati *de facto* hanno o meno con il terrorismo, ovvero se sono presenti delle cellule terroristiche sul loro territorio, o se vi sono state condotte delle attività illecite atte a finanziare il terrorismo internazionale. Il quarto elemento che è stato valutato è stato l'aspetto umanitario dei conflitti avvenuti durante la creazione degli stati *de facto*. Più precisamente la presenza o meno, a distanza di decenni dallo scoppio del conflitto, di persone rifugiate o di persone sfollate all'interno della stessa nazione. Per ultimo, ho analizzato le possibilità di ripresa dei conflitti in questione, in quanto nella letteratura accademica, spesso, vengono definiti "conflitti congelati".

Facendo alcune considerazioni sul secondo capitolo, è importante notare il ruolo dei partner chiave negli affari degli stati *de facto*, la Turchia per la Repubblica Turca di Cipro del Nord, e la Federazione Russa per l'Abkhazia e l'Ossezia del Sud. Questi partner finanziano sia economicamente, sia con la presenza dei loro contingenti militari sul territorio le istituzioni degli stati *de facto*. Esercitando questa sorta di influenza sugli stati *de facto*, possono allo stesso tempo esercitare una forte influenza sugli stati "nativi", come nel caso della pressione che la Russia esercita sulla Georgia, per evitare l'avvicinamento di quest'ultima alle istituzioni "occidentali" come la NATO e l'Unione Europea. La situazione si è presentata in maniera simile, ma per motivi diversi, nel caso della Turchia e la Repubblica di Cipro (la parte sud dell'isola, che è l'unica parte internazionalmente riconosciuta). La Turchia ha cercato di utilizzare il Cipro del Nord come leva nel momento in cui la Repubblica di Cipro negli anni 90 e nei primi anni 2000 era candidata per l'accesso nell'Unione Europea. I contesti storici che i tre territori e i loro abitanti hanno vissuto prima, durante e dopo la creazione di questi stati de facto sono stati considerati. Ciò ha portato alla luce le motivazioni delle azioni intraprese da tutti gli attori coinvolti in questa faccenda, e ho mostrato come tutti siano in parte responsabili nella creazione di instabilità causata da questi territori.

Rispetto al terzo capitolo sono emerse le difficoltà nel reperire le informazioni e i dati relativi ai parametri di riferimento che ho deciso di considerare, in quanto l'argomento degli stati *de facto* è spesso molto politicizzato e allo stesso tempo la mancanza di uno status legale di questi territori non permette la tracciabilità della attività illecite al proprio interno. Per quanto riguarda la criminalità generale nel Cipro del Nord, si è visto come la regolazione degli spostamenti di beni, persone e servizi che è avvenuta fin da subito, non ha fatto emergere una grande problematica in quella zona. Per quanto riguarda l'Abkhazia

e l'Ossezia del Sud invece, soprattutto durante gli anni 90 e i primi anni 2000, queste sono state zone grigie, dove la vendita e il commercio di moltissimi beni, come il petrolio, le sigarette, gli agrumi, le noci e il legname ha creato problemi finanziari alla Georgia, la quale da questi prodotti non è riuscita a ricavare budget statale. Rispetto all'ambito della criminalità aggravata, il Cipro del Nord soffre di un problema di traffico di esseri umani, soprattutto per quanto riguarda l'ambito sessuale e quello relativo alla droga, secondo il Dipartimento di Stato degli Stati Uniti. L'Abkhazia e l'Ossezia del Sud, d'altro canto, negli anni già citati, hanno visto una forte proliferazione di armi nel proprio territorio, la produzione di droghe e il loro conseguente traffico, la vendita di macchine rubate e la problematica relativa al sequestro di persone.

Per quanto concerne il terrorismo, non è stata riscontrata la presenza di cellule terroristiche all'interno del territorio del Cipro del Nord. Tuttavia, non è escluso che le banche del Cipro del Nord possano essere utilizzate per operazioni di riciclaggio di denaro. Un'altra cosa per cui Cipro del Nord è conosciuta, è la mancanza di accordi legali con gli stati sovrani per l'estradizione, cosa che ha permesso a molti ricercati internazionali di sfuggire alla giustizia trasferendosi lì. Nemmeno in Abkhazia e nell'Ossezia del Sud sono presenti cellule terroristiche sul loro territorio, ma i due territori sono stati utilizzati negli anni 90 e nei primi anni del 2000 come zona di passaggio di armi, dirette ai ribelli ceceni nella gola di Pankisi.

La quarta valutazione che ho condotto sulla sicurezza internazionale ha riguardato i rifugiati causati dai conflitti nei territori di Cipro e della Georgia. Dopo l'invasione turca del 1974, si crearono centinaia di migliaia di sfollati tra le comunità turche e greche del Cipro. Ognuna di queste è stata costretta a trasferirsi dalle proprie abitazioni verso uno dei due stati, scegliendo forzatamente su base etnica. Da quel momento, le due comunità vivono divise e solo nel 2003, con l'apertura della Linea Verde, è possibile visitare entrambe le parti dell'isola. Il conflitto in Abkhazia ha causato una migrazione forzata, soprattutto da parte della popolazione etnica georgiana che viveva in quei territori. Situazione simile si è verificata anche per l'Ossezia del Sud, che ha avuto due differenti ondate di rifugiati causati dai due conflitti avvenuti nel territorio (negli anni 90, e nel 2008). Si stima che, agli inizi del 2010, quasi il 6 percento della popolazione georgiana fosse sfollata (Kabachnik et al., 2010, p.2).

L'ultima valutazione che ho condotto ha riguardato la possibilità di una ripresa del conflitto. Per il Cipro del Nord, questa ormai rappresenta una possibilità remota, in quanto la comunità internazionale durante i decenni ha mediato costantemente tra le due parti. Altresì è improbabile una ripresa del conflitto, poiché sia la Grecia (molto vicina al Cipro sovrano) e la Turchia (l'unico stato a riconoscere Cipro del Nord) sono all'interno della NATO e il costo di un conflitto sarebbe troppo alto. Per l'Abkhazia e l'Ossezia del Sud le cose sono diverse. Entrambi i territori hanno come partner chiave la Russia, che può utilizzarli come leva di influenza nei confronti della Georgia. La Russia esercita una forte pressione nella regione, grazie ai propri contingenti militari nella zona, al processo di *passportization*, e alla dottrina della Responsabilità di Proteggere. Inoltre, la Russia ha già dimostrato nel 2008, come essa possa utilizzare uno dei due territori a fini militari e strategici.

Per concludere si può affermare che gli stati *de facto* rappresentano un pericolo alla sicurezza internazionale. Tuttavia, i casi del Cipro del Nord da una parte e dell'Abkhazia e dell'Ossezia del Sud dall'altra mostrano come sia importante la comunità internazionale (Nazioni Unite, Unione Europea) nel poter intraprendere un percorso di 'sterilizzazione' del conflitto. Il Cipro del Nord, grazie alla forte volontà della comunità internazionale di risolvere la questione, non rappresenta un pericolo alla sicurezza internazionale tanto quanto lo rappresenta l'Abkhazia e l'Ossezia del Sud. Questi ultimi, hanno avuto o tutt'ora hanno una marcata presenza di tutti i cinque i parametri che ho analizzato, e cosa più importante hanno un partner chiave che ha già dimostrato come possa iniziare un nuovo conflitto, qualora credesse di poter averne un importante tornaconto. Da qui si vede, come gli stati *de facto* pur avendo una loro legittimazione interna, se non vengono considerati debitamente dalla comunità internazionale, vengono utilizzati e sfruttati dal partner chiave per ragioni strategiche e politiche.

INTRODUCTION

The war conducted by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, after Russia's accusation of the alleged violations of human rights perpetrated by Ukraine's army in the two secessionist regions of Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR), makes it necessary to analyze entities like the formers.

De facto states are unrecognized territories with no seat at the international organizations level. This in turn means a lack of sovereignty status in the eyes of the other states. *De facto* states start to exist when secessionists of a determinate territory decide to succeed from a state, with whom they have a hard relationship. This hard relationship often could be traced back decades or centuries earlier. From the moment of secession, these territories have to rely upon other states (key patrons) that help them with financial aid, while exerting control over them.

De facto states are not considered fairly at the international political discourses stage. Often, the discourses upon *de facto* states resemble those of "rollercoasters". Their importance in the political discourses is highly discussed when they start to exist, but after years of impasse (especially when a settlement between *de facto* states and their home state is not reached), the "spotlight" over their issue diminishes considerably. Not for nothing, many scholars refer to the situation of *de facto* states as a "frozen-conflict" situation, as a new conflict can restart. However, the war restarting could happen only when one of the two parties sees war as a good outcome for them.

In this thesis, *de facto* states will be analyzed through the lens of international security. Here, I will consider the threat degree that *de facto* states pose to regional and subsequent international security.

To do that I will use the realist theoretical perspective on International Relations, to assess the threat degree for the international security of these territories. Particularly, I will focus on three different unrecognized entities: the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. The first one is one of the oldest cases of *de facto* states that continue to exist, and with whom a solution was not found since the 1970s. Noteworthy is the fact that TRNC is the biggest case of a *de facto* state in the political realm, due to its strategic position between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. The other two cases are both formally part of Georgia and have the Russian Federation as their main

partner. Abkhazia and South Ossetia are *de facto* states since the 1990s, and a settlement between Georgia and them was never reached. They are considered less than TRNC in international political discourses.

This thesis will be divided into three chapters.

The first chapter will be a theoretical chapter, in which I will lay the ground for my work. I will consider the concept of sovereignty, and why some territories are entitled to such status, while others are not. I will consider the concept of security, and why it is so important in the field of international relations. Lastly, the main aspect of *de facto* states will be considered.

The second chapter will be a sort of comparison matrix between the three *de facto* states that I will consider (TRNC, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia). There, I will briefly consider the other three "actors" involved in *de facto* state affairs (home state, key patron, and the international community) and their relations with the latter. I will show the ethnic composition of *de facto* states, as often the ethnic plurality in those territories created friction between the communities. Then, I will conclude the second chapter with a historical part, in which I will consider all the different stages of *de facto* states, like the situation before, during, and after the conflicts.

The third chapter is when I will consider the international security concerns regarding the existence of *de facto* states. I will use five different topics to assess the threats that the existence of *de facto* states poses. Firstly, general criminality in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia will be considered. Secondly, aggravated criminality and its presence on the territories of these three de facto states will be considered. Thirdly, I will consider the presence of activities related to terrorism in *de facto* states. Fourthly, I will assess the presence of refugees or internally displaced people caused by the conflicts. For the last point, I will consider a possibility of a war restarting in the regions of *de facto* states.

In conclusion, I will explain the outcomes of my research.

1. THEORETICAL CHAPTER

In this chapter, I will discuss all the theoretical aspects of the thesis around the topic of unrecognized states and I will answer the question if they represent a threat to regional and international security. Among the different entities that do not fit in the definition of sovereign states, unrecognized states stand out as one of the most interesting phenomena (Caspersen and Stansfield, 2011, p.1). I will analyze these territories that have achieved *de facto* independence, often through warfare but do not see their sovereignty status recognized by the international community. I will also synthesize how they function and what problems they create for the international community (in this chapter in general, and the other ones in detail).

To do so, I will analyze in this chapter two fundamental concepts of International Relations (IR): sovereignty and security. Both concepts will allow me to introduce properly the topic of the unrecognized states, as both concepts are at the core of the debate on them. Sovereignty is interesting, as it does not have a universal definition and is a matter of debate in academia. Also, it is one of the favorite concepts of policymakers, which they often use in political discourses. Nonetheless, it cannot be evaluated objectively. It is for this reason that *de facto* states exist and they are 'states' without an institutionalized status on the international stage.

On the other hand, security matters are part of domestic political debates conducted between the policymakers of a state and their citizens. The debates create frameworks of values that society would like to see protected. From that moment, it is up to the policymaker to choose proper policies to repel possible threats and securitize the nation or a region. It is in this context that states express their security issues to the international stage if they have a territory that has seceded from them, as in the case of the *de facto* states.

After the analysis of sovereignty and security, I will then move to define, categorize, and introduce the actors moving around the *de facto* states. Before starting with the theorization of sovereignty it is possible to define *de facto* states as states that tend to be small, tend to have a remote possibility of recognition by the international community,

and have intense exogenous and endogenous pressure upon them (Caspersen and Stansfield, 2011, p.6).

1.1. *Sovereignty*

The starting point of the analysis is the definition of sovereignty. Here it will be considered one of the definitions of sovereignty and the three problems that arise in conceptualizing this concept, namely: the changing normative context of state recognition, critical theorists that try to challenge the classical notion of the concept, and the 'linguistic turn' on sovereignty introduced by constructivists (Closson, 2011, p.58).

This concept is not easy to grasp, as it tends to be seen as the founding principle of modern nation-states, and at the same time, there is no universal conception of sovereignty, as it lacks a defined referent object (Aalberts, 2016, p.184). Physical things like armies, citizens, embassies, or intangible elements like supremacy, autonomy, and jurisdiction are all part of the concept of sovereignty, but alone they cannot constitute its meaning in its entirety (Aalberts, 2016, p.184).

According to Bartelson (1995), as cited by Tanja Aalberts (2016, p.184), sovereignty forms part of a web of concepts, each of which is bonded and that together constitute its meaning, connotating it in a particular historical and theoretical frame.

Today, most of the Earth is divided between internationally recognized states. They have sovereignty over their territories, which are delineated by internationally agreed boundaries (Caspersen and Stansfield, 2011, p.1). Today's status quo was created right after the 1960s, when most of the de-colonization processes were completed, and when more than seventy new states claimed and obtained independence. Indeed, in the international relations field, many scholars assume that the state has 'sovereignty' as its constituting principle (Aalberts, 2016, p.184).

For Hinsley:

> The idea of sovereignty was the idea that there is a final and an absolute
> political authority in the political community; and everything that needs to be

added to complete the definition is added if this statement is continued in the following words: "and no final and absolute authority exists elsewhere".

<div align="right">(Hinsley, 1986, p.26)</div>

This definition creates a duality between internal sovereignty and external one. The former is represented by the authority over a community, and this is a sort of hierarchical order and shows territoriality; the latter shows that on the international stage, there is not a hierarchical order, so all are led to anarchy, and equality between states (Aalberts, 2016, p.185). To be more precise, it is possible to say, according to Aalberts (2016, p.187), that 'sovereignty plays a double role: it both defines the distinction between inside and outside, and it offers the parameters for interaction and rules of conduct between formally independent states.'

Sovereignty is granted under customary international law by the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, which entered into force in 1934 (Closson, 2011, p.59). The First Article states that a State, as a person of international law, should possess four points: a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states (University of Oslo, n.d.). Important to note is the fact that it is the international community – at the level of international organizations, like the United Nations – that decides whether a territory can be entitled to sovereignty rights and can become a state or not. Recognition becomes here an inherently political, subjective matter and depends on individual cases (Closson, 2011, p.59).

Subjectivity is the starkest example of the way recognition works. Some states cannot demonstrate their ability to defend their territories but are sovereign, like in the cases of *quasi-states,* which will be analyzed later in this chapter. There are cases of *de facto* states that can demonstrate their authority power over their territories, like in the case of Somaliland, but still are not considered sovereign by the international community. The last example can be Taiwan, an island with whom most of the world has interactions and relations, but it is not entitled to sovereignty, as recognition will be politically too sensitive for the People's Republic of China.

In 1991, the European Community (EC), when it dealt with the Soviet Union's collapse, and the Balkan crisis, it added to the Montevideo criteria the nature and the practices of the state's political structures. The new criteria decided at the time were the following: the respect of established borders, the observing of human rights and democracy,

upholding the rule of law, the guarantee of minority rights, acceptance of nuclear non-proliferation, and the committing to settle disputes in peaceful manners (Closson, 2011, p.61). In 2003, this became the so-called policy of 'standards before status' used by the West in Kosovo, suggesting that recognition comes from the building of effective democratic institutions (Closson, 2011, p.61).

The second trend of the sovereignty literature is how critical theorists contest the traditional notion of the concept. This was particularly pronounced after the end of the Cold War when it was seen a proliferation of interstate conflicts, and humanitarian disasters (including genocides, like in the case of Rwanda, or the Balkans). It was noted by scholars how not all states had the same capacities in controlling their territories, and their population, as in the case of post-colonial states. For example, Jackson was one of the first scholars to theorize the notion of *quasi-states* (Closson, 2011). For him, *quasi-states* were post-colonial states without internal coherence and a credible government (Closson. 2011, p.62).

Many other scholars try to argue that sovereignty – as a founding principle of the modern state – is now outrun by empirical reality. Globalization and global governance tend to erode the sovereign states' authoritative and exclusive power (Aalberts, 2016, p.183). One of the clearest examples is the European Union, where European institution has exclusive competencies in certain fields, and where with the EU's regulations direct effect, the national governments cannot overturn the decisions made at an intergovernmental level (Aalberts, 2016, p.183). In the broader globalization debate, there is a concern about the increasing role of international institutions (like the UN or the WTO), multinational corporations (like Google, and British Petroleum), and non-governmental organizations (Aalberts, 2016, p.183).

The third debate on sovereignty was mainly a constructivist one. In fact, according to Closson (2011, p.64) 'for constructivists, the concept of sovereignty is just a general name to constitute an object (the state) into a class by which we create the world'. The meaning of sovereignty was dependent upon its use, and it was at the center of academic studies as a linguistic turn. Many scholars have tried to theorize how the concept was evolving throughout the last decades, how it can be called into question or how it can be simulated by many actors (state elites, regimes, societies), to survive, or how it can undermine a state's stability.

Sovereignty deals also with beliefs. In the 90s, the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and the Soviet Union ceded to exist, also because the Communist project became weaker (Closson, 2011, p.64). This happened since those states' citizens were no longer believing in the communist ideals, which were the heart of the grip that policymakers had up to that point.

In conclusion, the concept of sovereignty continues to have a fundamental role in IR debate, as it is not contested but it still does not have a universal definition. This allows states and their policymakers to decide upon their will if a state is entitled to sovereignty or not, creating problems like *de facto* states and *quasi-states*. The formers – especially those who see their status as non-recognized – are at the periphery, and their importance in the regional contexts is underestimated, so it is not a primary concern in the international agenda. The letters instead have seen their status recognized in a particular period (the era of decolonization), and because it was in the intentions of the majority of states to give such status to them.

This introduction to sovereignty showed how the concept is an inherently political status, that continues to be viewed as a price for those territories, whose behavior is considered a good one for the international community, and a 'status of limbo' for those who are considered a threat.

1.2. Security

The concept of 'security' is at the heart of academic studies on the topic of unrecognized states, as it is fundamental to understand what are the threats that the home state or many states can encounter when a territory is not entitled to sovereignty, namely all the things that can proliferate outside the legality in them. Security concerns also happen when *de facto* states are seen as puppets of larger powers, with the letters using them for their purposes (Caspersen and Stansfield, 2011, pp.2-3).

The security interest is particularly pronounced in Europe, and it can be dated back to the end of World War II. Security alone has its rationale and meaning, but in contemporary debates is often preceded by terms like 'common', 'global', 'regional', 'international, and 'human' (Stritzel and Vuori, 2016, p.41). Notable is the fact that national security continues to be the most influential notion of the concept for both international political'

practice and theory. Many scholars have noted that the concept is a political construction, that can change under specific contexts (Stritzel and Vuori, 2016, p.42).

Security in English is derived from the Roman word *Securus,* where *se-* means 'without' and *-cura* means 'worry', 'concern'. There are two ways to interpret *Securus* then, as noted by Mesjasz, cited in Stritzel and Vuori (2016, p.43): the first one is when the term is understood as a state of being secure and free from danger; the second one is when the term is understood as being without cares and worries.

The division into two understandings of security allows us to make a distinction between security under the light of a subjective perspective and an objective one. Another distinction worthy to be made is the conception of security in a positive way and a negative one. Starting from the positive way of theorizing security, it can be said that it is proper for non-expert understanding. Security, like safety, tends to be considered positively, with the assumption of 'the more security the better' (Stritzel and Vuori, 2016, p.46). On the contrary, for scholars like Wæver, security for a state is more of a negative concern, as it implies costs and entails dangers in repelling threats that a state has to face (Strizel and Vuori, 2016, p.46)

The differentiation of the objective and subjective dimensions of security was the core of the debate during the Cold War when the conceptualization of the concept happened. The objective dimension defined security in material terms, like the probability of states posing a threat to others; the subjective one was more based upon distorted psychological factors such as perceptions, fears, or negative group dynamics (Buzan and Hansen, 2009, p.33). Interestingly to note, the subjective dimensions were more of a challenge for the theorization of security as an objective state of being. For Wolfers (1952) for example, it was never possible to measure objectively security, as threat assessment was always influenced by numerous domestic factors, like national character based on traditions, or prejudices and ideological convictions of individual policymakers (Stritzel and Vuori, 2016, p.45).

For Wolfers, as cited by Stritzel and Vuori (2016, p.45), any level of security that a nation practice results from a process of negotiation between the policymaker and its citizens. The former is in a position that allows him/her to choose values, which are deemed to be protected in a society, the preferable level of security, and the means and sacrifices that such choice will imply for the collectivity (Stritzel and Vuori, 2016, p.45). Then it is up

to the citizens to decide whether these means and sacrifices must be accepted, or they have to be rejected.

National security – both in the scholarship field and in political circles – is the primary way of conceptualizing security. As it was written above, security starts from what can be recalled as a sort of social contract between the policymaker and its citizens. According to Wolfers, as cited by Stritzel and Vuori (2016, p.47), this passage creates a definition of the core values of a state, which are the fundamental principles a political order is based on. National security was at the core of the United States policies conducted right after the end of WWII, as in the case the of Truman's administration in the famous National Security Act of 1947 (Stritzel and Vuori, 2016, p.48). The Act was provided as a form of a 'reason of state' policy of absolute state preservation, to save the 'democratic' apparatus of the state (Stritzel and Vuori, 2016, p.48).

On the international stage, national security was used by the US as a 'package legitimizer' in the cold War competition with the Soviet Union and its 'Communist threat' (Stritzel and Vuori, 2016, pp.48-49). The notion was used and recoined also in other different states, with their concepts of national security, like in the case of Japan and the People's Republic of China (Stritzel and Vuori, 2016, p.49).

It was only after the end of the Cold War and the ease of tensions between the US and the Soviet Union that many scholars in Europe started to criticize the rigid notion of national security (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.111). The Copenhagen school of security studies, with its three main scholars Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, was one of the most prominent examples in the field of theorization of the conception of security as a political tool of legitimation (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.111). They introduced the term 'securitization' in academia, which was a sort of 'politicization' of any public issue (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.111).

As for Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud:

> Securitization means that the issue is not only politicized but presented as an existential threat to the community ('the referent object'): as a matter of survival that requires emergency measures outside the normal bounds of political procedure.
>
> (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.111)

Noteworthy of mention is the fact that any potential threat to the community became a security issue when there is a discourse that pronounces it as such. However, as a matter of security it cannot be used at any will of policy maker, as it is not the 'securitizer' (state leaders and professional security analysts) that decide, but the audience of the security speech act (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.111).

With all the information provided, a question arises, namely how national security can be transposed to the regional or the international stage. As was discussed above, during the Cold War it was easier for great powers, like the United States, to transpose their idea of national security up to the international stage, when there was a 'Communist threat' to contrast, to repel possible conflicts and the fear of a nuclear war. With the end of the Cold War, these dynamics became weaker for great powers. However, these concerns did not change the securitization discourse in weak states. They still are keen to sell their concerns as fundamental, to preserve the current order and to convey in the interests of great powers, to be helped to solve conflicts or disputes that continue to exist (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, pp.111-112).

One of the examples of this concern of weaker states is the home states of the *de facto* entities. The home state often lacks the resources necessary to act in preventing the threats that it perceives as such. To overcome the impasse, the security actors have to redefine the referent object away from the state itself, to the wider category that includes external powers, as it is vital for them to engage the international community to counter security threats (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.124). This process allows the home state to redefine security threats as regional or international ones, hoping to gain attention from external actors, which can help it to solve the frozen conflict (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011). This type of action in IR is often called 'the internationalization of security, which is a variety of securitization' (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.112). Lastly, it is important to note that such security discourses of home states are real threats that must be dealt with by the international community, as certain fields of *de facto* states also have to be considered a threat to the international community itself.

The threats that can emerge from the birth and the existence of *de facto* states are plenty, according to Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2011, pp.113-114).

Firstly, there is the case of general criminality (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.113). General criminality is referred to the production and smuggling of those goods that could

have been exported and imported legally if taxes and tariffs had been paid (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.113). Such activities harm not only the home state but also the other states of the region as well.

Secondly, the more dangerous field of aggravated criminality (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.113). In this field, there are all the activities that most sovereign states consider illegal, such as the production and smuggling of narcotics or weapons, the selling of body parts for transplantation, and human trafficking (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, p.113). These activities can be considered a threat by states if they are the end destination of such criminal activities.

Thirdly, terrorism and terroristic cells can be created in *de facto* states to hurt the home state, but also other states in the region or states on the international stage (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, pp.113-114). Such unrecognized territories can become home for terrorist groups, as well for those individuals, who have an order for arrests in sovereign states. In the last case, an extradition order cannot be negotiated. This was the case of Asil Nadir in 1993, at the time the former head of Polly Peck International, who fled from London to TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) (Pegg, 1998, p.5). He fled to avoid serious fraud charges in the United Kingdom, and as the UK does not recognize TRNC as a sovereign state, there was not possible to deal with an extradition treaty between them (Pegg, 1998, p.5). Namely, Nadir was effectively beyond the reach of British justice, thanks to the impossibility of a sovereign state having influence in an unrecognized one (Pegg, 1998, p.5).

Fourthly, there is a high risk of forced migration from their territories of origin, especially when in *de facto* territories the secessionist elite has one ethnic origin, and the rest of the population has another one.

Fifthly, even if most of the disputes between home-state and *de facto* states are sort of 'frozen' conflicts, there is still the possibility of a war's re-starting (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2011, pp.125-126). The recent example of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, to help the two self-proclaimed Donbas Republic of Luhansk and Donetsk is the highest momentum of that. Important to also mention is the protracted violence that comes from Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan's front. Other interesting empirical evidence of that is Russia's exercise of power towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and how Russia can exercise pressure on Georgia thanks to the two *de facto* entities.

In conclusion, the security of weaker states cannot be underestimated by the international community, as problems that arise from *de facto* states is a matter of security at the regional stage or for part of the world.

1.3. *De facto* states

One of the main arguments for the chaos that represents the international community is the existence of *de facto* states. This is because not all the world's habitable territories are divided into sovereign states, as there are also ones, with their respective governments, that are not entitled by the international community to sovereignty rights.

The phenomena of *de facto* or 'unrecognized states' has arisen since the second part of the Twentieth century, when the process of de-colonization begin. Right after the end of World War II, the dynamics of state-making, thanks to the self-determination concept and its post-1945 variant, became easier[1].

One of the problems that have arisen during the decade that followed the de-colonization process, when more than seventy new states were born, is their real possibility to be considered a state. A considerable number of states were born in that period without the empirical capacity to demonstrate their level of military, economic, and governmental effectiveness (Pegg, 1998, p.1). Their entitlement to sovereignty rights was impossible to overrule, and it has created an international system where there still are a large number of '*quasi-states*' as defined by Jackson. *Quasi-states* are states that have the same rights and privileges as the other United Nations states but lack the empirical capabilities to function properly, capacities that the other ones have (Pegg, 1998, p.1).

In the same period, after the '60s (when most of the de-colonization processes were completed) the problem of *de facto* states emerged. Unlike the *quasi-states*, the *de facto* states often effectively control their territories, with a functioning governing apparatus and in a military manner, but they are not entitled to a seat at the United Nation, nor they are entitled to participate at the international table (Pegg, 1998). They are considered by

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[1] The first attempt of the self-determination doctrine was put in plan by the US president Woodrow Wilson, during the Paris Conference, after the WWI. This first attempt did not work properly, as it was studied with a colonial idea in mind, and it did consider mainly the self-determinations of European states, rather than the colonial ones.

the international community illegitimate to control their territories and not recognizable under any doctrine. As was noted by S. Pegg (1998, p.1) 'the *quasi-state* is legitimate no matter how ineffective it is. Conversely, the *de facto* state is illegitimate no matter how effective it is'.

The theorizing of such entities was conducted by Pegg in the 1990s. He has tried to theorize what benefits and what limits the international community encounters when it faces unrecognized states. For Pegg:

> a *de facto* state exists where there is an organized political leadership which has risen to power through some degree of indigenous capability; receives popular support; and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a defined territorial area, over which effective control is maintained for an extended period of time.'

<div align="right">(Pegg, 1998, p.1)</div>

Another point that can be made to define unrecognized states is their aspiration for *de jure* independence, either through a formal declaration, a referendum, or other types of declarations that express clearly their desire (Caspersen and Stansfield, 2011, pp.3-4).

Categories of de facto states

Empirical evidence of *de facto* states during past decades can be traced all around the world. According to Florea (2017, p.339), it is possible to divide them into four groups, to differentiate them:

- *De facto* states that were entitled to statehood after a period of monitoring by international organizations
- *De facto* states that still exist and are not recognized
- *De facto* states that were peacefully integrated into the home state
- *De facto* states that were forcefully integrated into the home state

For the first category, there are examples of Kosovo (however, it is not a UN member, but it is recognized by the so-called 'Western democracies' and it is a borderline case), Bangladesh, Eritrea, and South Sudan (Table I) (Florea, 2017, p.339).

Table I: *De facto* states entitled to statehood

De facto state	*Parent State*	*Establishment*	*End of de facto statehood*
Kosovo (however, it is not a UN member)	Serbia	1998	2008
Bangladesh	Pakistan	1971	1974
Eritrea	Ethiopia	1991	1993
South Sudan	Sudan	2005	2011

(Florea, 2017, p.339)

The most famous de-facto states that still exist are the following: Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Somaliland, South Ossetia, Transnistria, the TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), and the most recent examples of Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic (Table II) (Florea, 2017, p.339).

Table II: Current most famous *de facto* states

De facto state	*Parent State*	*Establishment*	*End of de facto statehood*
Abkhazia	Georgia	1993	-

Nagorno-Karabakh	Azerbaijan	1991	-
Somaliland	Somalia	1991	-
South Ossetia	Georgia	1992	-
Transnistria	Moldova	1991	-
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)	Cyprus	1974	-
Luhansk People's Republic	Ukraine	2014	-
Donetsk People's Republic	Ukraine	2014	-

(Florea, 2017, p.339)

For the third category (Table III), we have those *de facto* states that returned to their home state after a negotiated settlement and they are the following: Ajaria (home state Georgia), Bougainville (home state Papua New Guinea), Gagauzia (home state Moldova), and Eastern Slavonia (home state Croatia) (Florea, 2017, p.339).

Table III: *De facto* states that returned to the home state through negotiation

De facto state	*Parent State*	*Establishment*	*End of de facto statehood*
Ajaria	Georgia	1991	2004
Bougainville	Papua New Guinea	1975	1997
Gaugazia	Moldova	1991	1995
Eastern Slovonia	Croatia	1995	1998

(Florea, 2017, p.339)

The last category (Table IV) has in it very famous examples like Biafra (home state Nigeria), Chechnya (home state of the Russia Federation), Croatian Republic of Herzog (home state Bosnia and Herzegovina), Republika Srpska-Krajina (home state Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Tamil Eelam (home state Sri Lanka) (Florea, 2017, p.339).

Table IV: *De facto* states that have seen a forceful reintegration by the home state

De facto state	*Parent State*	*Establishment*	*End of de facto statehood*
Biafra	Nigeria	1967	1970
Chechnya	Russia	1991	1999
Croatian Republic of Herzog	Bosnia-Herzegovina	1991	1996
Republika Srpska-Krajina	Bosnia-Herzegovina	1991	1995
Tamil Eelam	Sri Lanka	1984	2009

(Florea, 2017, p.339)

It can be noted from the tables above (from I to IV), how many unrecognized states were born right after the collapse of the Soviet Union and how none of them were recognized, but they still exist, or they were reintegrated into the home state.

Actors

After this brief historical introduction to the existence of *de facto* states and the path that a *de facto* state can follow during its existence, now it is important to analyze which actors are involved.

Four actors need to be examined in the discussion of *de facto* states (Buzard et al, 2016, p.585):

- the secessionist elite, which seeks recognition
- the government of the home state, from which the secessionist elite is attempting to secede
- the key partner of the de-facto state
- the international community

The former two are the actors of the dispute, and they have a conflictual relationship. The latter two are outside actors and are composed of states, groups of states acting in concert.

All of them play a role in the instability that *de facto* states represent, and all of them have their preferable outcome from this situation as can be seen in Table V.

The international community's aim in this situation is to see reunification with the home state, rather than independence. Noteworthy, not all the states have the same preference, but in groups like OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) or the United Nations, the most preferable outcome for the *de facto* state is reintegration, especially when the home state can lobby its reintegration position at the international stage (Buzard et al., 2016, p.585).

Traditionally, international society has chosen to respond to the existence of unrecognized governments in three ways, as classified by Pegg (1998, p.4):

- active opposition using embargoes and sanctions
- ignoring the existence of *de facto* states and refusing to engage with them
- the 'limited acceptance' approach

The first one is the active opposition using embargoes and sanctions, like in the case of TRNC (Pegg, 1998, p.4). A variety of international organizations including the Universal Postal Union, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and the International Air Transport Association have refused to deal with TRNC in their respective fields of competence (Pegg, 1998, p.4). The situation has seen a worsening after the ruling of the European Court of Justice in 1994, which imposed on European Union members to no longer accept movement and phytosanitary certificates from TRNC authorities (Pegg, 1998, p.5). This embargo has impeded the development of the tourist sector in TRNC, as it was quite impossible to aid with the stay of tourists in the unrecognized territories (Pegg, 1998, p.5)

The second option for the international society was to ignore the existence of *de facto* states and refuse to engage with them in any matter, like in the case of TRNC, Chechnya, or the Provisional Government of Eritrea (Pegg, 1998, pp.5-6). Considering TRNC, international society did not help in any matter the unrecognized state, denying loans and funds for development needs from International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Pegg, 1998, p.6). Turkish Cypriots on their side received development aid from Turkey,

but not in the volume to resolve the problem of salinization of TRNC's water supplies, through the construction of dams and irrigation systems[2] (Pegg, 1998, p.6).

For Pegg (1998, pp.6-7), the third option is what can be called a 'limited acceptance' approach. In this case, it is interesting to note the example of Eritrea, Somaliland, and TRNC. Eritrea, since the secessionist elite proclaimed independence from Ethiopia in 1991, was not entitled to have a seat in the UN, nor can receive any external assistance (Pegg, 1998, pp.5-6). However, the UN opened a permanent representative's office in it. In the case of Somaliland, it was created as a representative office of the United Nations Development Program or briefly UNDP (Pegg, 1998, p.6). For the TRNC, parallel to the embargo strategy, it was clear that a settlement for a united Cyprus was not possible without the Turkish part, so it was allowed for the TRNC to have non-diplomatic representative offices in cities like Brussels, London, New York, Washington, and Abu Dhabi (Pegg, 1998, p.6). TRNC has also access to the UN, albeit not-diplomatic ones. It can be noted that all the concessions that were described above, did not presuppose future ones, as the international society have a fear that such non-juridical accommodation of *de facto* states can undermine their normative positions against succession (Pegg, 1998, p.8).

Differently, the key partner quite always prefers recognized independence, sharing the same preferable outcome with the secessionist elite. Key partners are often called 'patrons', as they contribute heavily with resources, both economic and military ones. According to Buzard, Graham, and Horne (2016, p.586), they do so for several reasons: one is the capacity to impose high costs on the home state, like in the case of Russia (patron) with Georgia (home state of South Ossetia and Abkhazia); ethnic solidarity with the secessionist, like in the case of Turkey and the TRNC; or the hope of a future annexation of the disputed territory, like in the case of Armenia (patron) and Azerbaijan (home state of Nagorno-Karabakh).

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[2] On the other hand, the Greek Cypriots has received all the necessary, to solve the problem of salinization of water supplies. They have received massive development funding by World Bank, the European Community (EC), and other international institutions (Pegg S. 1998, p.6).

Table V: Preferable outcome for the actors involved

Actors	*Preferable outcome*
Secessionist elite	Mainly independence
Home State	Reintegration of secessionists into their borders
Key partner or 'patron'	Independence of *de facto* state or maintenance of the status quo
International community	Reintegration to the home state or integration through federalism

(Buzard et al., 2016, p.585)

The secessionist elite's desire can be resumed in three preferable outcomes, also following the example of the three *de facto* states that will be analyzed later in this thesis. Abkhazia aims to become independent from Georgia; TRNC aims to enter into Cyprus with an agreement of a federalism status with the Greek part; South Ossetia aims to enter Russia's Federation through a referendum.

Lastly, the home state desires to see the disputed territories returned to them through the use of force or a negotiated settlement.

In conclusion, I analyzed in this chapter the fundamental notions of *de facto* states and the categorization in which they can be divided. The three cases that will be developed later are particularly important, as they have a strong interaction with all the four actors presented here, and alone they can answer if they are a threat to regional and international security or not.

2. ANALYZING *DE FACTO* STATES

In this chapter, I aim to be able to collect all the useful information that is relevant to this thesis, before considering the five categories of threats to security that may arise when a *de facto* state exists in the third one. In the following pages, I will consider:

- the home states of *de facto* states
- the key patrons of *de facto* states
- the international community relations with *de facto* states
- the ethnic composition of *de facto* states
- the historical context
- the stages before the conflict in *de facto* states
- first low-scale conflict
- the main conflict
- situation post the conflict in *de facto* states

2.1. *The home states of the three de facto states*

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

TRNC is a particular case and it differs quite remarkably in many aspects from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The home state of TRNC is the Republic of Cyprus, mainly known as Cyprus. It was founded in 1960 after the Zurich and London Agreements of 1959. In it, the two main communities of the island – the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots – were present in the institutions with a 70-30 ratio, with predominant seats in the hands of Greek Cypriots (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.26). However, the state formed in those terms created since the beginning of high disputes between the two communities, and it soon brought to the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974. Turkey's invasion happened in two different waves, the first one started on 15 July, while the second on 14 August (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). After the second wave of the Turkish invasion of the island, 36 percent of the island was captured (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.44).

Since then, the two communities became separate. In the south, the Republic of Cyprus continued to exist, although without the presence of Turkish Cypriots at the governmental level and it became the only internationally recognized state present on the island. In the North, the Turkish Cypriots formed TRNC, with its government and constitution, and still today it is not recognized by anyone outside Turkey.

Throughout the decades that followed, the Republic of Cyprus continued in various attempts to solve the crisis. Firstly, Cyprus has decided to put an end to the idea of *Enosis* (the incorporation of Cyprus into Greece, as part of the former Hellenic world). Secondly, Cyprus was ready to encounter the Turkish Cypriots' requests for a confederation of the two communities (but not funding it on an inter-ethnic basis, as was the will of the Turkish Cypriots).

Cyprus now is a state of the European Union, which was joined in 2004. The international community does not recognize the northern part of the island, where the Turkish Republic of Cyprus (TRNC) is located. No state outside Turkey recognizes TRNC, and for the international community, the northern part is still under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Cyprus. Cyprus's aim to find a solution with the northern part of the island is not perceived as a geopolitical aim, rather Cyprus sees this as a way to solve one of the longest "frozen conflicts" in the world.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia

In the other two cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, both the secessionist states are still formally part of Georgia. They seceded right after the end of the Soviet Union, and their intention was that of receiving an autonomous status in Georgia or gain independence from Georgia. In the case of Abkhazia is important to mention also the composition of Georgians within its borders, and how they were displaced after the civil war, but this will be analyzed better in the following pages. Noteworthy is the fact that Abkhazia, during the Soviet years, always benefited from a certain degree of autonomy, while South Ossetia did not.

Georgia during the last years of the Soviet Union, especially during Michael Gorbachev's era, started to think about independence. During those years, especially in the Zviad Gamsakhurdia [3] era, nationalistic ideas started to rise.

As explained by Emil Souleimanov:

> The cultivation of the myth of Georgia as the "hospitable mother" has consigned South Ossetians and Abkhazians to the roles of mere guests who – only relatively recently within the context of the long history of Georgian statehood – have settled on Georgian territory, and from whom respect for the territorial integrity of the "host" country can be rightfully demanded. Seen from this lofty perspective of "historical justice," the separatist aspirations of these subordinate peoples have, therefore, practically no legitimacy at all. This is the source of the slogans that were commonly heard in the vocabulary of many nationalistically oriented Georgians during the 1980s and 1990s: "If you don't like things in Georgia, go back to Iran" is what Ossetians heard in reference to their Iranian origin, while it was suggested to Abkhazians that they move back to the North Caucasus, to Russia and their Adyghean fellow tribesmen.

(Souleimanov, 2013, pp.117-118)

De facto states continue to exercise a hold over domestic political life in the home state of Georgia, and at the same time, they have a symbolic meaning in the politics of the key patron of the Russian Federation (O'Loughlin et al, 2015, p.9). Abkhazia and South Ossetia are often cited in debates about national identity in Georgia's discourses (O'Loughlin et al, 2015, p.9), and they are one of the main focuses of Georgia's politics, as they are seen as a potential threat to Georgia's national security.

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[3]Zviad Gamsakhurdia was the first president of Georgia after its independence from Soviet Union. However, before that he was one of the most important figures, during the Soviet years, in promoting Georgian's nationalistic ideas.

2.2. *Key-Patron of the three de facto states*

In this part, I will focus on the relations that exist and were existing between the *de facto* states and their key patron.

In doing so, I would like to stress the importance of *de facto* states in having a key patron that can help them for their cause. However, I will not focus so much on the strategic porpoises of the key patron in aiding both militarily and economically *de facto* states, as this will be analyzed in more detail in the third chapter.

Here I would like to focus on the relations that occur between *de facto* states and their key patron under their linkages, as theorized by Levitsky and Way (2010, pp.43-44). For them, there could be six different types of linkages (Levitsky and Way, 2010, pp. 43-44):

- *economic linkages*, such as flows of trade, investment, and credit
- *intergovernmental linkages*, like bilateral diplomatic and military ties, and participation in treaties
- *technocratic linkages*, which means the share of a state's elite educated in the other country
- *social linkages*, like flows of people, which include tourism, immigration, and refugee flows
- *information linkages*, like flows of information across borders, with both internet or traditional media (television, radio, journals)
- *civil-society linkages*, which means ties with NGOs, religious and party organizations, etc.

These linkages primarily were theorized to answer to the international democratizing pressures during the post-Cold War period (Levitsky and Way, 2010). However, these linkages can fit perfectly the relations that occur between the key patron and the *de facto* states, as made by Gerrits and Bader (2016) for the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Here, I will do the same also for how it concerns the linkages between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Turkey.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

The Turkish community of Cyprus has always received help and influence from Turkey. This happened, as the Turkish Cypriots community on the island was expelled (from the vision of TRNC) or quit (from the vision of the home state) from the institutions of the Republic of Cyprus funded in 1960.

TRNC since its beginning as a *de facto* state received military and financial aid from Turkey. Reading the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.) it can be seen that there is a full webpage dedicated to TRNC's relations with Turkey. In it, it is demarcated how Turkey was one of the three guarantor powers of the island, with the United Kingdom and Greece, and how it has the right to intervene in 1974 with an invasion, to prevent a Greek military coup orchestrated by a junta (TRNC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

TRNC describe Turkey as the main external actor that supported the Turkish Cypriots in their struggle during the 1960s and the first years of the 1970s, with moral and financial support (TRNC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). TRNC states also that the military presence of Turkish military contingents was the only way to provide Turkish Cypriots with safety, and this was necessary also after the proclamation of the Republic in 1983 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

Turkey supports TRNC with humanitarian and vital aid, starting with the most basic needs like communications, transportation, and postal service (TRNC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.), finishing with development funds used in the construction webs for water supplies to the northern part of the island. It is recent the construction (in 2013-2015) of a water pipeline that transports water from the Anamur River in Turkey to TRNC (Mason, n.d.). This pipeline deepens the Turkish presence on the island (Mason, n.d., p.18), creating a strong dependence on the TRNC towards its patron state.

Using the linkages theorized by Levitsky and Way (2010), TRNC has strong economic linkages with Turkey. The Turkish lira is the main currency in TRNC, so the two economies are strictly interconnected. TRNC is under embargo from all those states that do not recognize it, and so a lot of goods produced in TRNC have to pass through Turkey, before being exported to other parts of the world.

As was already discussed above, TRNC is recognized only by Turkey, and with the latter, it has strong relations. Military troops of Turkey are stationed on the island, in the northern part, to protect TRNC. Turkey and TRNC also have trade relations, as the 'western' embargo does not allow a legal exchange of goods, so it is Turkey that commerce with TRNC.

For the technocratic linkages, I would like to highlight as an example the fact that both the last three prime ministers of TRNC have studied in Turkey during their University years. Ersan Saner, who served as prime minister of TRNC from 9 December 2020 to 5 November 2021, graduated from Trankya University (located in Edirne, Turkey's European side). Faiz Sucuoğlu, the prime minister of TRNC from 5 November 2021 to 12 May 2022, completed his medical education at Istanbul University. The current prime minister of TRNC - Ünal Üstel – graduated from Istanbul University in 1983.

The social linkages between Turkey and TRNC also exist. Since the beginning of the *de facto* state, many Turkish citizens have decided to move to the northern part of the island and settle there permanently. Another interesting aspect of the social linkages between them is the fact that the vast majority of the tourists that visit TRNC are Turkish citizens.

Even if TRNC has its traditional media, Turkish media are available on the northern part of the island as well.

The civil society linkages are present between TRNC and Turkey, starting with religious organizations, and finishing with pro-Turkey political party organizations.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Here I will consider both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as Russia Federation, since the separatist movement emergence in these two territories, became one of their closest allies. Russia Federation was one of the main partners of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and their relations became even more interconnected after 2008 when Russia decided to recognize both of them as independent counties.

Russia is instrumentalizing the unrecognized states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to put effective pressure on Georgia's government in Tbilisi (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.2). However, it is important to note that Abkhazia, despite its dependency upon Russia for

military support, and Russia's financial flows into it, wants to maintain its formal independence from either Russia or Georgia. South Ossetia instead, is more prone towards Russian Federation, as it would like to become part of the Russian Federation and to reunite with its 'northern part' of North Ossetia.

Russia's role in the two different regional conflicts was predetermined by the fact that the newly born Russian Federation in the 1990s, positioned itself within the context of a successor of the Soviet Union (Souleimanov et al., 2017). This has caused the involvement of the Russian Federation in *de facto* state affairs, to exercise more power over its neighbors, especially Georgia (Souleimanov et al., 2017, pp. 5-6).

One of the principal aims of the patronage that Russia conducts with *de facto* states in the Caucasus (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, but also Nagorno-Karabakh and also Transnistria for Moldova) is to limit at any cost the integration of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova into Western institutions (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.6).

As for Levitsky and Way (2010, pp.43-44), there could be six different types of linkages between de-facto states and sovereign states: economic linkages, intergovernmental linkages, technocratic linkages, social linkages, information linkages, and civil-society linkages.

For the economic linkages, both Abkhazia and South Ossetia rely upon Russian Federation. Nonetheless, Russia is its main trading partner. For Abkhazia, Russia is the biggest importer in the territory, with Turkey, Germany, the Baltic States, Moldova, and China, which have a smaller role as importers (Gerrits and Bader, 2016, p.301). South Ossetia has almost all of the imports come from Russia (Gerrits and Bader, 2016, p.301). The same happens when we consider the export flows from the two *de facto* states to the outside (Gerrits and Bader, 2016, p.301).

Both the *de facto* states use the Russian ruble as their primary currency. The economic integration with Russia is seen also in the Economic agreements signed after the Five-Day War, which lifted trade barriers and started cooperation in customs affairs (Gerrits and Bader, 2016, p.301)

The intergovernmental linkages that exist between Russian Federation and South Ossetia and Abkhazia started way before their recognition in 2008. After the conflict in the two territories, Russia had peacekeepers missions on their soil. However, after 2008 Russia

started to implement binding agreements with the two *de facto* states legitimizing their positions. Russia Federation signed an *Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Support* with both territories (Gerrits and Bader, 2016, p.302). These agreements stated the defense of respective territories' sovereignty, allowed the construction of military bases on their respective territories, and posed the basis for future economic integration (Gerrits and Bader, 2016, p.302)

Technocratic linkage is when a share of the country's *de facto* state is educated outside, and in this particular case in Russia, or the former Soviet Union. In this case, very often the political elite of the two territories has spent many years in Russia's or Soviet's Union universities, being indirectly influenced by Moscow (Gerrits and Bader, 2016).

Social linkages between Russian Federation and the two *de facto* states mainly come from the large number of tourists who visit the region, especially Abkhazia (Gerrits and Bader, 2016, p.304). Russia's tourists can benefit from a visa-free travel regime with Abkhazia, which since the Soviet years is one of the most visitable destinations (Gerrits and Bader, 2016, p.304). South Ossetia instead, due to its lack of tourism, has social linkages mainly due to the large diaspora of Ossetians, as the North Ossetia (a part of the Russia Federation), is home to some 460.000 ethnic Ossetians (Gerrits and Bader, 2016, p.304).

Information linkages arise from the usage of Russia's language. In both the *de facto* states, Russian is one of the official languages, and even if the official language is Abkhazian and Ossetians, the population of the two territories could speak Russian (Gerrits and Bader, 2016). All the Russian television is visible in them and it is important to note that Russian television is more popular than the autochthonous television of the two *de facto* states (Gerrits and Bader, 2016).

For the institutional linkages, it could be said the three electoral systems and institutions are very similar between Russian Federation and Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

According to O'Loughlin, Kolossov, and Toal (2015):

> Russian troops are on the ground in all three of these regions today (but not in Nagorny Karabakh), and Russian financial support is vital to their survival. However, the local elites in these regions are not fully compliant instruments of Russian influence. Kremlin-backed candidates for elections in these regions have not always been successful, and instability and backlash have

sometimes resulted from too manifest a "Kremlin hand" in local politics. The geopolitical dynamics for all three conflicts in the Caucasus can by no means be reduced to the opposition between Russia and the West or to manipulations of Russian authorities pursuing their objectives. These have roots in the deep history of relations between titular peoples, violent conflicts in the past, collective historical memory, and opposed narratives. Particularly important is intransigent competition over territory historically shared by two or more ethnic or cultural groups and considered by all of them as the cradle of their identities.

(O'Loughlin et al., 2015, p.5)

2.3. *The ethnic composition of the de facto states*

Here I would focus on the ethnic composition of *de facto* states, to be able to create a clearer picture of the frictions that were created before, during, and after the conflicts.

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

The island of Cyprus is a crossroad between Europe, Africa, and Asia. Turkey is its nearest neighbor and it is followed by Syria and Lebanon (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). The largest ethnic group on the island is the Greek Cypriots (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.2). According to the last official census of the island's population in 1960, the Greek Cypriots accounted for 78 percent of the inhabitants of Cyprus (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.2). After the war and the division of the island into two parts, in 2008 the population of the Greek part was almost 800.000, with foreigners and religious minorities accounting for 15 to 20 percent of the total population (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.2). Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to figure out the population of the Turkish part of the island, as an accurate population census does not exist (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.2).

Cyprus as an island always had a strong relationship with the Hellenic world since the beginning of its history (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.3). Unfortunately, nowadays it is quite difficult to define Greek Cypriot identity, as many of the inhabitants of the Greek part

stress their Greek identity, while many others prefer to be considered as with a proper Cyprus identity (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.3).

The Turkish Cypriots instead are considerably smaller in terms of numbers and have a more recent origin. At the time when independence was proclaimed there were 103.822 Turkish Cypriots on the island (18 percent of the total population) (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.5). This minority arrived right after the Ottoman conquest of the island in 1571 (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.5). Many of the Christians on the island converted to Islam to be less taxed and receive more social and financial benefits (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.6). Also here, many of the Turkish inhabitants of the island think that their identity is Turkish and many feel their identity is mainly Cypriot (Ker-Lindsay, 2011).

There are three recognized groups living in Cyprus that compose the remaining 4 percent of the island's population: Maronites, Armenians, Latins, and a small and unrecognized Gypsy community (Ker-Lindsay J., 2011, p.8).

Abkhazia

In this part, I would like to try to show Abkhazia society's ethnic composition considering three different periods: the one in the first half of the 20th Century, the one right before the end of the Soviet Union, and the one after the civil war and the formation of the *de facto* state.

Now I will consider the ethnic composition of Abkhazia before the conflict in the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s. The ethnic composition before the 1990s was conducted by the Soviet Union, while the one in the 2000s was conducted by the hand of the Abkhazian institutions (Clogg, 2008, p.307). The ethnic balance of the territory was altered dramatically after the conflict of the 1990s (Clogg, 2008, p.307). The armed conflict had many different consequences. Firstly, it caused approximately 8.000 – 10.000 deaths (Clogg, 2008, p.307). Secondly, it has caused the displacement of half of the territory's population.

The pre-war census was conducted at the time of the Soviet Union in 1989, and it is a contested one, as for the fact that during those years not all of the population was placed in the right ethnic group (Clogg, 2008, p.308). However, it is still important to see the disbalance between the pre-war and the after-war situation.

The population of Abkhazia in 1989 was just over 525.000, with the ethnic Georgians as the most numerous ethnic group with 45.7 percent of inhabitants (Clogg R., 2008, p.308). The Abkhaz represented 17.8 percent of the total population, followed by Armenian and Russians, respectively with 14.6 percent and 14.3 percent (Clogg R., 2008, p.308). The other ethnic groups (mainly Greeks, Estonians, and Ukrainians) present in the territory represented 7.6 percent (Clogg R., 2008, p.308).

The share of ethnic Georgians constituted an absolute majority in the mono-ethnic Gali district (94 percent), in the Black Sea littoral, and Sukhumi, the Abkhaz capital, until the collapse of U.S.S.R. (Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011, p.633). Russian out-migration from the region started in the 1970s, while Armenians did not see a significant change in numbers during the Soviet years (Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011, p.633).

However, after the Georgian-Abkhaz war – between the summer of 1992 and the beginning of autumn in 1993 – the overall population of Abkhazia shrank by half, changing the ethnic composition of the territory (Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011, p.633). A huge majority of Georgians and Mingrelians left or were expelled during the conflict by the Abkhaz, the ones who remained were those living in the Gali district (Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011). The total number of Georgian and Mingrelian refugees can be estimated at 190.000 up to 240.000 (Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011, p.633).

Currently, even if the Abkhazians did not grow so much in terms of population, they are representing almost half of the entire population of the *de facto* state. This means that Abkhazians are very sensitive about the fact that they can – again – become the minority in it, making the return of Georgians to their homes difficult.

To summarize the ethnic composition of Abkhazia in 1939, 1989, and 2003, see Table V.

Table V: Ethnic composition in Abkhazia

Ethnic Group	1939	1989	2003
Abkhaz	56.197 (18,0 percent)	93.267 (17,8 percent)	94.597 (44,2 percent)
Georgian (also Mingrelian)	91.967 (29,5 percent)	239.872 (45,7 percent)	44.041 (20,6 percent)

Armenian	49.705 (15,9 percent)	76.541 (14,6 percent)	44.869 (21,0 percent)
Russian	60.201 (19,3 percent)	74.914 (14,3 percent)	23.420 (10,9 percent)
Other (mainly Greeks, Estonians, and Ukrainians)	45.496 (14,5 percent)	40.467 (7,6 percent)	7.079 (3,3 percent)
Total	311.885 (100,0 percent)	525.061 (100,0 percent)	214.016 (100,0 percent)

(Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011, p.634)

South Ossetia

South Ossetia's titular group – namely the Ossetians – was since the Soviet Union's time the major ethnic group present in the territory. However, it is important to mention that the majority of Ossetians live in the republic of North Ossetia, which is part of the Russian Federation, and not in the *de facto* state (Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011, p.633). During the Soviet years, the territory did not see huge changes in the proportions of Ossetians and Georgians, and neither this happened during the two conflicts of 1991 and 2008 (Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011, p.634). This was because, in the 1992 peace agreements, there was a fixation on Georgian and South Ossetian military and administrative control matched by ethnic compositions (Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011, p.634).

In the case of South Ossetia, the last census was conducted in 1989, at the time of the Soviet Union, so I will reference – as in the case of Abkhazia – to the two censuses made by the Soviet Union in the region, and therefore I will show the disputed numbers calculated by the International Crisis Group.

After the war in 1991 and the one in 2008, it can be argued that the population has declined sharply, due to the two decades of political and economic instability (International Crisis Group, 2010, p.2). The Tskhinvali authorities claim a population of 72.000 in the second decade of the 21st Century (80 percent of which are ethnic Ossetians), while Tbilisi asserts that the population lies between 8.000 and 15.000

(International Crisis Group, 2010, p.2). A probably accurate and reasonable study conducted by an independent Russian researcher estimates 30.000 inhabitants (International Crisis Group, 2010, p.2).

One is certain, after the 2008 conflict and the consequent defeat of Georgian forces, the Georgian properties were destroyed, to prevent a future re-settlement (Wendle, 2008).

A summary of the composition of the ethnic population of South Ossetia can be seen in Table VI.

Table VI: The Ethnic Composition of the Population of South Ossetia

Ethnic groups	1939 census	1989 census
Ossetian	72.266 (68,1 percent)	65.232 (66,2 percent)
Georgian	27.525 (25,9 percent)	28.544 (29,0 percent)
Jews	1.979 (1,9 percent)	396 (29,0 percent)
Armenian	1.537 (1,4 percent)	984 (1,0 percent)
Russian	2.111 (2,0 percent)	2.128 (2,2 percent)
Total	106.118 (100,0 percent)	98.527 (100,0 percent)

(Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 2011, p.635)

2.4. International community involvement in the affairs of the de facto state

I will briefly now analyze the involvement of the international communities in *de facto* state "affairs".

The international community tends to respond in the wake of any conflict, and the cases of *de facto* states can be an example of this. United Nations for example, since the beginning of the conflict in Cyprus (way before Turkey invaded the island in 1974) started to mediate between the Greek and the Turkish community to ease the tensions. UN Security Council throughout the decades had tried to pass many resolutions to try to settle the dispute, and many times it was near to arranging with the two counterparts. However, all the attempts made at the stages of the UN were not implemented or were broken by one of the two parts. One of the most prominent examples was the one that happened in the early 2000s. The Annan Plan, developed by the UN, was created to implement a

federation on the island of Cyprus through a referendum voting. The referendum did not pass, as the huge majority of Greek Cypriots voted against the UN's idea of a creation of a federation made of two states (one mainly composed of Greek Cypriots, and the other of Turkish Cypriots).

European Union (former European Community) was another intergovernmental organization that since the wake of the conflict had many interactions with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The role of the EU became even more visible when in the 1990s the Republic of Cyprus (the only recognized state on the island) encountered the standards of the EU and formally entered the list of states, that were near EU accession. Since then, the EU became very concerned in settle the dispute between the South and the North, aiming to find a solution before the official accession of the Republic of Cyprus, which happened in 2004.

In the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well there was UN involvement, since the beginning of the conflicts in the two separatist regions. A special office was opened to tackle the humanitarian disaster that was created by the conflict in Abkhazia. In 1993, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) was established by the UN Security Council Resolution 858, as to verify if the cease-fire agreement between Georgia and Abkhazia was respected or not. The mission was terminated in 2009 after the Russians vetoed it in the Security Council, right after the Five-Day War in 2008. In the Five-Day War, the Russian Federation invaded South Ossetia, to prevent the Georgian attack against Tskhinvali (the capital of South Ossetia), and consequently appealing to the norms of international law invaded Georgia as well.

2.5. *Historical context*

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

In ancient times Cyprus came under the rule of the Persian Empire, the Egyptians, the Roman Empire, the Byzantines, and the Arabs (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.11). It became also a territory of conquest during the Third Crusade by King Richard the Lionheart, a territory passed under Venetian rule and the Ottoman Empire (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). When the island became administered by Britain, it became a useful strategic point for ships traveling through the Suez Canal to India (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.14). The Greek-speaking

Orthodox Christians hoped since the beginning of the British rule of the Island that there could happen a unification with Greece, calling this aspiration *enosis*, a *Megali Idea* (great idea) that has the intention to recreate a Byzantium of the Greeks – that lived and were oppressed by the Ottoman Empire until then – based in Constantinople (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, pp. 14-15).

During the British rule of the island, Britain undertook many major infrastructure projects and political reforms, but at the same, to pay a fixed sum to the Ottomans, it had to levy taxes for the islanders facing heavy resentment from the inhabitants (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 16). Britain annexed the island when the Ottomans entered the First World War sidelining Germany, and it strengthened its control over the following years (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.16). With the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, the new Republic of Turkey decided to retire from the island and tried to settle the Turkish Cypriots to return to the mainland, but few of them decided to listen (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.16).

In the 1950s, on the island was created the Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston (EOKA), a Greek Cypriots nationalistic paramilitary organization, which has as its major objective the end of British rule and the *enosis* (reunification) with Greece (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.20). On the other hand, the Turkish Cypriot community, seeing the EOKA formation and its consequent actions, decided to be closer to the British authorities, and they also created as a response to EOKA, the Turkish Resistance Movement (TMT), supported by Turkey (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.22). The divergence of visions between the two communities created more friction between them.

In 1958 Archbishop Makarios (the leader of Greek Cypriots) accepted the fact that also independence could be a viable solution for the island's problem, and since that year it posed a base for future meetings between Greece and Turkey in Zurich to settle the dispute. In 1960, after more than a year that the Zurich-London agreements were signed, the sovereign Republic of Cyprus was officially formed.

The new Republic had a complex constitutional structure that was designed to balance power between Greek and Turkish communities, to repel any possible sidelining of Greek Cypriots at the damage of the Turkish ones (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.25). Powers were divided between the president (elected by the Greek community) and the vice-president (elected by the Turkish community), and both of them had veto rights over proposals and bills (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, pp. 25-26). Right below them, there was the Council of

Ministers, composed of seven Greek Cypriots and three Turkish Cypriots. This ratio was proper for many other institutions, like the civil service and the single-chamber House of Representatives (the new state's parliament) (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.26). For the judiciary branch, the supreme constitutional court was composed of a Greek Cypriot judge, a Turkish one, and a neutral foreign judge, who was also the president of the Court (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 26). There was a strong separation between the two communities, enhanced by the political system. The two communities continued also to have strong ties with their respective 'motherlands' of Greece and Turkey (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.26).

To preserve the political order of the Republic, Britain, Greece, and Turkey were the guarantor powers (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.27). All three countries had the duty to protect the sovereignty of the state of Cyprus, after the signing of the Treaty of Guarantee, and to intervene if the status of the island was challenged both domestically or externally (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.27). To maintain the new status quo of the island, Greece and Turkey were allowed to maintain small numbers of military contingents on Cyprus, under the terms of the Treaty of Alliance (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.28). The Greek forces were limited to 950 personnel, while Turkish troops can be accounted for 650 troops (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.28). The third of the treaties that were signed between the three countries was the Treaty of Establishment, which allowed Britain to retain 99 square miles of the island as sovereign military territory (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.28).

Abkhazia

The roots of the conflict in Abkhazia are very similar to those of South Ossetia. The root lies in the period that followed the October Revolution of 1917. Abkhazia received a guaranteed status of autonomy from the constitution of the independent Georgia Republic (1918, 1921) (Souleimanov, 2013, p.114). But after the conquest of Tbilisi by the Bolsheviks, Abkhazia became the Abkhaz Soviet Socialist Republic, with the same status as Georgia, forming a confederation of the two (Souleimanov, 2013, p.114).

However, this Abkhazia's status was terminated in 1931 at the hands of *Kavbyuro* (Committee for the Caucasus), which annexed Abkhazia to Georgia under the Union Treaty (Souleimanov, 2013, p.114). It was only ten years later that Abkhazia was incorporated wholly into the framework of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, with the principle of autonomy (Souleimanov, 2013, p.114).

Since then, during the Soviet year, life continued with no particular tensions between Georgians and Abkhazians, even if the Abkhaz *intelligentsia* always tried to consider the incorporation of Abkhazia in Georgia as illegitimate (Souleimanov, 2013).

South Ossetia

The conflict in the 1990s has its historical beginning in the period of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (Souleimanov, 2013, p.112). At the time, there were three different attempts at an uprising by the South Ossetians population of the Shida Kartli region, in Interior Georgia (Souleimanov, 2013, p.112). The uprisings were moved by the discontents against the economic policies of the government in Tbilisi, accused of supporting the interests of the big landowners, which were mainly ethnic Georgians, while the majority of Ossetians were peasants (Souleimanov, 2013, p.112).

During these uprisings, South Ossetians rebels received (although not in official ways) material support from the Red Army (Souleimanov, 2013). Georgia on the other hand always counterattacked heavily against South Ossetian positions. Tbilisi perpetrated ethnic cleansing of Ossetians, with 3.000 – 7.000 Ossetians killed, while nearly 20.000 South Ossetian civilians had to flee to the Soviet Union before the Georgian army occupied the territory (Souleimanov, 2013, p.113). When the Red Army occupied Georgia in 1921, many South Ossetian fighters joined the Soviet's fight (Souleimanov, 2013). The 1922 year was characterized by the reaching of the status of an Autonomous Region of South Ossetia in the framework of Sovietized Georgia (Souleimanov, 2013, p.113).

The period of Soviet rule did not see conflicts between Georgian and Ossetians. Interethnic peace and stability were obtained with a high percentage of interethnic marriages, the closeness of the traditions and cultures of the two ethnicities, and the same Orthodox religion (Souleimanov, 2013, p.113).

2.6. The stages before the conflict

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

In the Cyprus case, the stages before the conflict have to be found in the period between the independence of Cyprus in 1960 and the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974. This period is often named the period of "constitutional collapse" (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.29).

The Greek community was not so keen on the new sovereign Republic, as they see it as the end of the *Enosis* idea, and as an institutional injustice, as they had to share institutional powers with a minority. On the contrary, the Turkish Cypriots were keen for the state that was created, as they found it reasonable, and since the partition of powers was to a certain degree a good outcome for them. However, both communities disagreed about the establishment of separate municipalities in the main cities of Cyprus (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.31).

Makarios then decided to propose an amendment to the island's constitution, going through strong refusals from both Turkey and Greece, as it was not in the plan of the guarantor powers to alter the constitution (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). Since then, the situation deteriorated hugely and brought to violence the island.

Abkhazia

What happened right after the end of the Soviet Union and the consequent war for Abkhazian's independence from Georgia has to be researched in the strengthening of the nationalist ideology of the Soviet Union's Republics during the years of Gorbachev's *perestroika*[4] (Souleimanov, 2013, p.115). For example, Georgians started to view Abkhazians and South Ossetians as a sort of 'fifth column', which had the intention to undermine the territorial integrity under the will of Moscow (Souleimanov, 2013, p.115).

Abkhazian's discontent was not also caused by this Georgian's aversion towards Abkhazia, but it was also caused by the economic underdevelopment of the latter if

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[4] *Perestroika*, along with *glasnost*, was one of the political slogans and reforms that the CPSU general secretary Mikhail Gorbachev undertake to renew Soviet Union. The main aim of *perestroika* was to reform Soviet Union politics and economy to face the challenges of the 1980s, as at the time Soviet Union was in crisis.

comparing it with the other Georgia's areas (Souleimanov, 2013, p.129). The major role for the Abkhazian's discontent against Georgia was the nationalistic fuel for a major degree of autonomy from Georgia, while during the 70 years of Soviet hegemony the Abkhazians and South Ossetians had a more favorable orientation towards the center – Moscow – rather than Tbilisi (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 121).

South Ossetia

South Ossetians during the latest years of the Soviet Union started to rise many questions around the socioeconomic underdevelopment of the economy, as it equated to half that of the Georgian average in those decades (Souleimanov, 2013, p.122). One of the main discontents was in talks about South Ossetia's status. It has inferior administrative status, if compared with Abkhazia or Ajaria, as South Ossetia had only the status of the autonomous *oblast*, which significantly lowered their degree of self-government (Souleimanov, 2013, p.122).

Tensions between South Ossetians and Georgians started, when Tskhinvali (the capital of South Ossetia), issued a declaration in 1989, supporting the separatist demands of Abkhazia (Souleimanov, 2013, p.123). To counter this separatist demand, Tbilisi decided to formalize Georgian as the only official language in the country. This was seen by South Ossetians as an attempt to undermine the South Ossetian's identity, and they started to fear the rise of Georgian ethnonationalism (Souleimanov, 2013, p.123). The following attempt of Ossetians in adopting a law elevating the status of autonomy from the former *oblast* was rejected by the central government in Tbilisi.

2.7. *The first low-scale conflict*

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

From what it concerns TRNC, the first low-scale conflict was mainly characterized by riots and consequent violence between the two communities. What has happened in those decades of the constitutional collapse, as described by Ker-Lindsey (2011), is a mix of

pressures from the outside for an ideal settlement and the terroristic campaign conducted by EOKA II, to continue to pursue the idea of *Enosis*. Another aspect that has to be considered is Turkey's rejection of the Makarios' constitutional changes. The proposed amendments rejected by Turkey created tensions between the two communities. In December 1963, after Turkish Cypriots protests in many cities, clashes between the two communities were reported all over the island, sometimes forcing people from their homes (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.34). Following the events mentioned above, the majority of the Turkish Cypriots were forced out of the institutions of the Republic of Cyprus.

In the part regarding the main conflict, I will not focus solely on the Turkish invasion, but I will focus also on what happened after the first clashes between the two communities were reported.

Abkhazia

The first low-scale conflict in Abkhazia started in 1989 when protests erupted after the proposed establishment of a branch of Tbilisi State University in Sukhumi. At least 16 – predominantly Georgian youngsters – lose their lives in clashes and many hundreds were wounded (Souleimanov, 2013, p.132).

In 1991, a referendum was taken in the Republics of the Soviet Union on the new Union Treaty. Georgia boycotted it and it became – consequently – one of the first Soviet Republics declaring independence. Abkhazia instead took part in the referendum, as they did not want the breakup of the Soviet Union, which would have to mean becoming part of Georgia's newly independent state, without assurances for a certain degree of autonomy.

Low-scale violence started to rise in the region, as the Abkhaz intellectuals fueled separatist themes, and at the same time, Georgia fueled nationalistic propagandistic ideals (Souleimanov, 2013).

South Ossetia

The low-scale conflict in South Ossetia erupted in 1989 when at the end of the autumn the so-called "March on Tskhinvali" took place, organized by Zviad Gamsakhurdia and

the parliamentary deputy Givi Gumbaridze (Souleimanov, 2013, p.124). The aim was to call for the unity of Georgia, through a meeting on the central square of the South Ossetia capital (Souleimanov, 2013, p.124). The march has caused fatalities on both local Ossetians and Georgians protesters. The clashes in South Ossetia seemed to be over the following year, but they created a triangular scheme of confrontation, according to Souleimanov (2013, p.124). The Georgians' activities aimed for independence from Moscow, in response, bring negative reactions from South Ossetian institutions, as they started to see a radicalization of Georgians against other minorities (Souleimanov, 2013, pp.124-125).

When Tbilisi decided to reject the Union Treaty of 1922 and all the consequent decisions at the Soviet Union's level, South Ossetians reaffirmed the applicability of the Soviet Constitution in the cornerstone of the administrative borders of their territories (Souleimanov, 2013, p.125). Tbilisi in the following months decided to ban regional parties from taking part in Georgia's election, *de-jure* eliminating ethnic minorities from the political life of the republic (Souleimanov, 2013, p.125). This maneuver moved South Ossetia to request to the U.S.S.R. the annexation of the newly founded South Ossetian Soviet Democratic Republic. This attempt failed, as Georgia the next day rejected South Ossetia's new republic, and it then put South Ossetia under a blockade, the termination of its autonomous status, and declared a state of emergency in the region (Souleimanov, 2013, pp.125-126).

2.8. The main conflict

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

As it concerns the specific case of TRNC, the main conflict can be collocated way before Turkey invades the island. The work of a peaceful settlement of the dispute was a hard task given to the United Nations. On 4th March 1964, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 186, which established in Cyprus the United Nations Force (UNFICYP) (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.37). Other than that, the Resolution was fundamental in the following events in at least two ways. Firstly, it referred to the Republic of Cyprus institutions as the only legit to administer the island, creating a de-legitimization of the Turkish minority and their right to have a voice in its internal affairs of it (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.38). This

situation persists also today, as the United Nations recognize the Greek Cypriots' Cyprus as the only sovereign state of the island, and at the same time not-recognizing the Turkish Cypriots' TRNC. Secondly, the Resolution appointed the United Nations with the responsibility of managing the future peacemaking processes (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.38).

All the future negotiations drafts were rejected by one of the parties involved, leading to immobilism in those years. Nonetheless, the inter-communal fighting has continued to erupt from time to time, like in the case of November 1967, when Greek Cypriots attacked Turkish Cypriots villages in the south of the island and received in response a heavy bomb attack from Turkey as a retaliation.

After the events of 1967, two things happened. One is the fact that Makarios started to negotiate with Turkish Cypriots an arrangement, to continue to be a sovereign state, as he has seen the fall of the *Enosis* idea. The second fact was that in 1971, General George Grivas (the co-founder of the EOKA movement) returned to the island, to form EOKA-B, a vehemently pro-union organization (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, pp.41-42). Then, Grivas started a terroristic campaign against the Makarios administration. The death of Grivas, substituted by Dimitrios Ioannidis (the leader of the Greek military junta), accelerated the *coup d'état* organized by the military to depose Makarios and create an opportunity for the *Enosis*. In 1974, the *coup d'état* deposed Makarios, after the bombing of the presidential palace of Nicosia. Makarios flowed away and Nicos Sampson, a former EOKA member, was appointed the head of the Cyprus administration.

Turkey, fearing a possible *Enosis* or ethnic cleansing of the Turkish Cypriots living on the island, decided to invade the island. Turkey did that with two different waves of attack. Under international law, the first attack was legit, as it was done to prevent a change in the status quo on the island, and as Turkey was under the Treaty of Guarantee has the right to intervene (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). However, the second wave of the invasion was not legit by any of the three Treaties, and so it was condemned by the international community in its entirety (Ker-Lindsay, 2011).

Abkhazia

In August 1992, after the fighting in South Ossetia, and the shift at the top of Georgia's government with the arrival of Eduard Shevardnadze, the conflict in Abkhazia escalated quickly and armed violence started (Alexseev, 1998, p.198).

There were two different moments during the civil war in Abkhazia. The first is when the Georgian government with the deployment of troops in Abkhazia marched into Sukhumi, without particular Abkhazian resistance, as the latter were not armed properly. During the first moment, Georgians perpetrated lotting, assaults, and murders. The second moment instead, has seen the huge involvement of volunteer paramilitaries of the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus[5], since 1993. Even if in 1992, the cease-fire agreements of Sochi were signed, the Abkhazians and the volunteers from the Caucasus launched an attack on Sukhumi, held by Georgians. The war of Sukhumi was won by the Abkhazians, and the Georgian troops were forced to retrieve it.

Both sides at the end of the conflict were culpable of perpetrating ethnic cleansing against the other community, and the conflict caused a huge number of internally displaced people, mainly ethnic Georgians.

South Ossetia

Armed clashes erupted in 1991 in Tskhinvali and its outskirts, as also in the Java district in the northwest, as around 3.000 troops of the Georgian ministry of the interior were deployed (Souleimanov, 2013, p.126). The tense situation of interethnic clashes convinced the Ossetians to participate in a union-wide referendum on the new Union Treaty of the Soviet Union, which South Ossetians approved with 99 percent of the votes (Souleimanov, 2013, p.126). At the same time in March, Georgia proclaimed its referendum for independence, which was boycotted by both South Ossetians and Abkhazians.

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[5] The Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus was a militarized political organization, which included all fighters from the Caucasus regions. It was active during all the 1990s and this organization was crucial during the war in Abkhazia

What followed was attacks perpetrated by armed groups of Georgians against South Ossetians, to force them out of their homes. To counterattack, also South Ossetians started reprisals against the Georgian minority on the territory. From June 1991, South Ossetia's capital clashed with artillery fire by the hand of Georgian paramilitary units. This war cost the lives of a thousand of Ossetian civilians, it has caused also the fled from South Ossetia's territory 100.000 of civilians – both Georgians and South Ossetians – according to many sources (Souleimanov, 2013, p.162). The cease-fire was agreed upon in Sochi, as in the case of Abkhazia, in 1992. From then, a Joint Peacekeeping Force (JPKF) of Russians, Georgians, and Ossetians was agreed upon.

Before the 2008 War, a set of problems started to arise. Firstly, the closure of the Ergneti Market in South Ossetia, where many smuggled goods were sold. The closure of the market caused thousands of Ossetians and Georgians a lack of income, and it created tensions between the two communities. Secondly, Georgia started to rise concerns about the peacekeeping operations conducted by Russians on the soil of unrecognized states. Very often, Russian peacekeepers conducted illegal activities and were not doing anything to prevent clashes between the communities.

Since August 2008, when a bomb explosion targeted a car transporting Georgian peacekeepers, hostilities began between Ossetians and Georgian troops. Georgian villages started to be assaulted, and in retaliation, Georgian troops started to hit Ossetians. Mikheil Saakashvili then decided to invade South Ossetia to stop the hostilities. As a response, Russia accused Georgia of aggression against the Ossetians and invaded Georgia. On 18 August, Russian forces started to pull out of Georgia, as their objective was reached.

The conflict caused a huge displacement, with around 30.000 people that after many years after the conflict continued to be displaced (UNCHR, 2009, p.5). The 30.000 people are mainly ethnic Georgian that fled from South Ossetia, as they suffered a campaign of ethnic cleansing by South Ossetians (UNCHR, 2009, p.5)

2.9. Situation post the conflict

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

The first outcome of the conflict was the displacement of people from their homes. The vast majority of the displacement regarded Greek Cypriots, specifically those living on the north coast, along the Karpas peninsula, and from the region where the city of Famagusta is (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.47).

Consequently, during the month after the invasion, Turkish Cypriots who were living in the southern part of the island started to relocate to the north. They were relocated to the expropriated Greek Cypriot properties, and they were around 50.000 (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.48). At the same time as the settlement of Turkish Cypriots, a migration from Turkey began. In the decades after the invasion, thousands of Turkish from the mainland decided to move to the island and start a new life there, and they too received former Greek properties in the north of the island.

The international response to Turkey's invasion of the island was massive. Since the beginning, Turkey's actions were condemned by the UN and the international community. The situation deteriorated more after the TRNC proclamation of independence in 1983. However, at the United Nations stage, the rounds of talks continued without pause. Throughout the decades there were many attempts to settle the dispute between the two communities, but all of them failed in being implemented. The most important attempt was made in 2003 and it has its roots in the 1990s. In the 1990s, the Republic of Cyprus was accepted by the European Union as a candidate for future membership, and for the years that followed European institutions had the will to solve the crisis before an official membership. In 2003, it was decided to let the two communities of the island decide through a referendum, with the main will to create a federal state. this referendum did not pass, as the majority of the Greek Cypriots rejected the quest, while – surprisingly – the Turkish inhabitants of the island voted for the vast majority of it. Before the referendum and the enters of the Republic of Cyprus into the EU, other events occurred on the island. In 2003, the government of TRNC decided to open access through the Green Line (the borders between the two Republics), allowing all those who have wanted to visit the northern part of the island, something that before was not possible.

Another important aspect was the fact that the two so-called 'motherlands' of the two communities (Greece and Turkey) continued to have tense relations outside the Cyprus problem, and this created a huge international community's effort to ease them, as both Greece and Turkey were NATO members (Loizides, 2016).

Abkhazia and South Ossetia

It is difficult to date an end for the main conflict in Abkhazia, as since 1993 (where theoretically a cease-fire was negotiated) interethnic violence had continued in the following years. After the civil war in Abkhazia, under the presence of the United Nations peace-keeping operation, the main problem was represented by the IDPs (internally displaced peoples), mainly Georgians. They were forced out from the territories where they lived by the Abkhazians, and they continued to live in tough conditions near the borders of Abkhazia, waiting for a settlement. Since the 2000s, Abkhazia continued with its state-making efforts, it has held many elections, where not always the pro-Russia candidate has won.

Another relevant event that occurred on Abkhazia's soil was the Abkhazian's conquest of Kodori Gorge. Kodori Gorge was one of the last regions of Abkhazia still controlled by Georgian forces. During the Five-Day War of 2008, Abkhazians decided to gain control of the region, while Georgian forces were directly confronting Russia's military forces.

How it concerns South Ossetia, since there were two different wars since the 90s, it can be said that South Ossetia continues to exist, and since 2008 it has had even stronger relations with Russia than before. In the last period, there were huge political debates in South Ossetia about a future annexation into the Russian Federation and being reunited with North Ossetia.

3. THREAT ASSESSMENT

In this third chapter, I will try to assess the threat posed by *de facto* states to regional and international security. As was explained in the first chapter, security is mainly a national concept. However, this national interest could be transposed to the regional and international field, if the domestic threat assessment of a state affects also the ones in other states.

I therefore will analyze the threat to international security of *de facto* states with five different fields. Firstly, I will consider the general criminality present on the territories of *de facto* states. Secondly, aggravated criminality, such as selling weapons, chemical substances, and drugs. Thirdly, I will assess the presence of terrorism or the presence of terroristic cells in their territories. Fourth, the problem that arises with the internally displaced persons (IDPs), that fled their homes and properties, due to the ethnic conflict. Lastly, I will assess the possibility of a war restarting. In this case, it will be not a real prediction, but it will be an explanation of all the processes that were created by *de facto* states – and consequently by their key patron – to not alter the status quo or to threaten the home state.

Another important premise I would like to make is around the data and the sources I will use in this chapter. One of the problems that arise when someone analyzes unrecognized states is the lack of information available on their real economic situation, the volume of their commerce with the outside, and the reliable political or social information about the conditions of their inhabitants. Nonetheless, often de facto states are defined as "black holes" (Kupatadze, 2005, p.67). For this reason, I will focus in the next pages only on reliable information that comes from other "impartial" states, NGOs, the United Nations, or from scholars, who had made huge efforts in analyzing data and information of the three *de facto* states in question.

As will be seen in the next pages, it is not possible to have reliable information for all years of *de facto* states, as they all had a certain period in which they were under the "spotlight" of the international community and others in which they were marginal.

3.1. General Criminality in de facto states

According to Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2011, p.114), general criminality means the production and smuggling of "civilian" goods. The goods exported and imported in *de facto* states lack the payment of taxes paid to the home state and the other states involved.

In this thesis, I will assess the threat of the emergence of a particular problem for international security. This means that I will not assess the presence of a specific problem, like for example general criminality throughout the existence of *de facto* states, as these so-called 'black holes' did not have a continuous tracking of such activities. The trucking of such activities is mainly conducted by NGOs, by the government of the home state (however, often pieces of information that come from the home state are highly politicized), or by reports conducted by international organizations. The assessment of the presence of such threats to international security will be made considering activities that have caused problems to the home state or the broader extent of the international society as a whole.

One example regards Georgia, as was pointed out by Alexander Kupatadze:

> The most influential geographic factor that affects smuggling is the existence of uncontrolled territories known as "black holes" - Georgia's internal conflict zones. In Abkhazia and South Ossetia, well-established smuggling networks have emerged. They are comprised of corrupt officials, law enforcement structures, criminal groups from both sides (Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian), Russian peacekeepers, and an impoverished and marginalized portion of the population (primarily IDPs, proper refugees, and people still residing in conflict zones). Criminal groups in both regions are flexible. They quickly build criminal networks that are often internationalized and include representatives from opposite camps. As a result the legal and illegal goods of Russian production are reaching the neighboring regions of Georgia through the conflict zones - Shida Kartli (administrative center - Gori) adjacent to South Ossetia and Samegrelo (administrative center - Zugdidi) bordering Abkhazia and are further distributed to the rest of Georgia.
>
> (Kupatadze, 2005, pp.67-68)

The situation of corruption in Georgia was slightly changed by the Rose Revolution in 2003 and the consequent anti-corruption revolution of November 2003 (Kupatadze, 2005, p.68). The Rose Revolution decreased corruption at the level of state governmental officials, but it did not help in preventing the continuation of smuggling operations between the two uncontrolled territories and Georgia (Kupatadze, 2005).

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Talking about general criminality in TRNC is not an easy task. Firstly, there is not so much evidence that the smuggling of goods occurred on daily basis to the Republic of Cyprus or the other states. Secondly, TRNC since its formation exported many goods to other states. Thirdly, TRNC for many exported and imported goods is considered part of the Republic of Cyprus. One of the goods that applies to such a scenario is citruses produced in the north, which can move to other states with appropriate quality checks.

Nonetheless, from time to time there are arrests in the Republic of Cyprus of little smugglers that pass the Green-Line, to sell certain duty-free goods, like cigarettes and tobacco.

Abkhazia

Abkhazia during the 1990s and the first years of the 2000s became one of the main roads for the smuggling of goods in the Caucasus region. This has happened due to its geographic position. Abkhazia has a coast that lies on the Black Sea, and it has the port of Sukhumi, from where all types of goods were imported or exported. The problem of smuggling is a problem for both the *de facto* state and Georgia, as both of them are deprived of tax revenues, that otherwise could boost their small budgets (Kukhianidze et al., 2007 p.74).

Illegal activities occur all along the Enguri River. The goods illegally traded are the following: non-ferrous metals, cigarettes (which flow through Sukhumi by Russian and Turkish ships to the market in Zugdidi), flour, gasoline, wine, citruses, timber, scrap iron, and hazelnuts (Kukhianidze et al., 2007, pp.74-77).

Many goods from Abkhazia are smuggled also outside the *de facto* state and the home state. In the case of scrap iron and timber, these goods arrive from Gali in the Zugdidi district and are then brought to the ports of Poti and Batumi, to be exported to Europe and Turkey (Kukhianidze et al., 2007, p.77).

The criminal groups in Abkhazia often use for smuggling a wide range of socially vulnerable people, including refugees and internally displaced peoples (IDPs), and the poor, as the economic conditions in both Abkhazia and Georgia brought people to survive working in the illegal trade (Kukhianidze et al., 2007, p.84).

South Ossetia

Since the end of the conflict in South Ossetia in the 1990s, an efficient network of smuggling was created in the area. One of the biggest problems in patrolling the South Ossetian – Georgian border is the impossibility to establish border guards and customs service checkpoints because this will be interpreted by secessionists as an attempt to establish new Georgian state borders (Kukhianidze et al., 2007, p.74). At the same time, from the Georgian part, a creation of real borders with South Ossetia would likely be seen as a sort of legitimization of the Tskhinvali government as a sovereign state.

During the end of the 1990s one of the flourished markets in Georgia was the Ergenti market, located in South Ossetia. Ergneti market was famous not only in South Ossetia, but also in Russia (especially in North Ossetia), and Georgia, as in it there was contraband of cigarettes, fuel, wheat flour, and various nutritional products. According to Georgia's Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, more than 70-80 percent of South Ossetia's budget income is derived from illegal business (Kupatadze, 2005, p.69). The Ergneti market was closed in 2004 by Mikheil Saakashvili – the then president of Georgia – as the smuggling in it was costing the Georgian state more or less one hundred million dollars per year in lost tax revenue (Kupatadze, 2005; Kukhianidze, 2009; Kukhianidze et al., 2004).

The contraband of goods in South Ossetia happens mainly through the Roki tunnel, a tunnel that unites North Ossetia in Russian Federation and unrecognized South Ossetia. After a good – such as fuel, cigarettes, and flour – passed the tunnel, it then went directly

to the Ergneti market, where both Ossetians and Georgians buy items without paying taxes and at a minor cost (Kukhianidze, 2009).

It was interesting also the smuggling of flour, as described by Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze (2004):

> There are two options for smuggling flour. The first is to smuggle it without appropriate documents under escort by criminals or law enforcement officials. The second is to smuggle with false documents, and the flour is transported to nearby Georgian mills, re-packed into Georgian sacks (with Georgian labels) from Russian ones and labels affixed identify the flour as domestically produced. In this case, a special convoy is not needed - just smaller bribes for the traffic police on the transport to Tbilisi.
>
> (Kukhianidze et al., 2004, p.20)

After the closing of the Ergneti market in South Ossetia, a loss in jobs occurred. Many thousands of people lose the possibility to receive an income from the selling of contrabanded goods. Smuggling operations after the Ergneti market closure became the domain of petty traders, known as "women with bags", or of Russian peacekeepers, especially for how it concerns contraband cigarettes (Kupatadze, 2005, p.69).

Nowadays, there is no available information about general criminality in South Ossetia. However, it is not difficult to imagine that contraband of goods between South Ossetia and Georgia still occurs, but not in the volume of the early 2000s, and not under the "spotlight" of Ergneti Market.

3.2. *Aggravated Criminality in de facto states*

In the field of aggravated criminality, I would like to consider the trafficking within the territory of the *de facto* states of drugs, arms, and humans. As it was previously said, there is no official reliable data on the exact number of drugs imported or exported, arms used and sold in those territories, but the main intent is to figure out if there was and there is a real presence of such activities in *de facto* states considered here.

In the case of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, I will consider human trafficking on the territory. In the case of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, important to note is the high concentration of weapons among the population, especially among criminal groups in both territories (Kukhianidze et al., 2007, p.69). Both regions were rife - during the 1990s and the first years of the 21st Century – with assassinations, kidnappings, hostage takings, and other crimes (Kukhianidze et al., 2007, p.69). This mainly was due to the instability in the Caucasus in those years, with several conflicts, and several terroristic groups present in the region, but it was also caused by the impossibility of an agreement on the political status of those territories between Georgia and the secessionist elite of the *de facto* states. The reforms undertaken by Georgia's government after the Rose Revolution have improved the Georgian capabilities in intercepting drug trade, but the problem, even at a smaller scale, remains.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

As was already mentioned above, the island of Cyprus has a strategic position in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, and it serves as one of the main entry roads to the European Union, the most important market in the world. For the case of TRNC, I will consider now the problem of human trafficking that occurs in the northern part, and consequently concerns the Republic of Cyprus and the European Union in its entirety.

According to the U.S. Department of State and their *2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cyprus*, the Republic of Cyprus would be in Tier 1, while TRNC, even if it is not formally included in the ranking would be in Tier 3 (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Tier 3 means that TRNC does not fully meet the minimum standards required to eliminate the trafficking of humans, and it does not make efforts to contrast such practice, if it was recognized it would be in the same Tier as states such as Afghanistan and North Korea.

Turkish Cypriots do not investigate nor prosecute criminals involved in human trafficking, even if they have included trafficking in their criminal code in March 2020 (U.S. Department of State, 2022). They do not have created a web of victim protection, with respective social and economic services, aimed to protect the victims, nor they implement special forces to contrast trafficking in their territory (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

Many observers noted in 2022 that 28 nightclubs in TRNC acted as brothels, in which sex trafficking occurs daily (U.S. Department of State, 2022). In 2000, TRNC passed the *Nightclubs and Similar Places of Entertainment Law of 2000*, according to which nightclubs would provide only entertainment based on dance performances (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Nonetheless, the representatives of TRNC rarely enforce the law. Turkish Cypriots representatives do not exert much effort in assisting potential victims against human traffickers. There is a hotline for trafficking victims, created by the TRNC Ministry of Labor (U.S. Department of State, 2022). However, the hotline is not always operational and is understaffed, and many experts reported that potential victims of human trafficking are afraid to call, for fear that TRNC representatives are involved in such activities (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

Traffickers exploit women from Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa in sex trafficking in nightclubs, with the latter licensed and regulated by Turkish Cypriots representatives (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Both men and women are exploited in plenty of other working fields, such as industrial and construction sectors, agricultural sectors, and domestic and retail sectors (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

The exploitation of humans in sex trafficking or the drug industry happens also, according to U.S. Government, when foreign university students enter the TRNC, under the false premises of scholarship, free housing, and employment (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Students then became coercively involved in criminal activities as they see their documents revoked, especially students coming from sub-Saharan African countries (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

Abkhazia

In the case of Abkhazia, there is very much evidence of illegal arms transfers, especially in the period of 1990s and the early 2000s. Many illegal arms had Abkhazia and South Ossetia as their starting point, for then moving through internal Georgian districts, with Pankisi Gorge as the final destination. In the Pankisi Gorge, there were training camps for Chechen fighters, and for other terroristic organizations such as Al-Qaeda (Kupatadze, 2005, p.68). Illegal arms were arriving in the two *de facto* states by ship from Turkey or

they were brought by the Russian military through Roki Tunnel (South Ossetia), or the Psou River in Abkhazia (Kukhianidze et al., 2004).

In Abkhazia, one of the biggest criminal zones in those years was the cease-fire lines (CFL), where neither Abkhazia nor Georgia exert control. Another zone where there were prosperous criminal activities, like assassinations and kidnappings, was the Gali district and Kodori Gorge (Kukhianidze et al., 2007, p.74).

The arms present in the territory of Abkhazia are due to the Soviet facilities that were present on the territory before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but also due to the conflict in the 1990s. In those years, many actors provided rebels and the secessionist elite with weapons, grenades, and bombs to help them with the struggle for independence. Since then, all the arms that were not used and their ammunition remain in the territory.

When it concerns drugs, I will consider the period of the 1990s and the early 2000s. Marijuana and hashish were produced locally, on the other hand, other substances such as heroin or cocaine were imported from Turkey for transit the substances to Russia, or European countries by boats (Kukhianidze et al., 2004, p.34). The narcotics that were produced locally, were grown for domestic consumption, particularly in the Gali district (Kukhianidze et al., 2004, p.34).

Another problem of aggravated criminality was the flourishing business of stolen cars. The majority of stolen cars were headed and exchanged for ransom in the Tskhinvali Region and Abkhazia (Kukhianidze et al., 2004, p.36).

South Ossetia

In South Ossetia, the law enforcement officials and the criminal world, from both *de facto* state and home state parts, have created favorable conditions for the smuggling of any type of goods, unpunished crime, and consequent violence (Kukhianidze et al., 2007, p.74). South Ossetia's aggravated criminality all circled the Ergneti Market (until its closure in 2004) and the Roki tunnel.

During the Shevardnadze era, certain organized criminal groups that controlled the trade-in Ergneti Market had patrons in the State Chancellery of Georgia and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Kupatadze, 2005, p.68).

After the closure of Ergneti Market, Roki Tunnel continued to be operative. The tunnel was used by the Russian military to traffic arms, particularly in the wake of the 2008 Five-Day War. Russian military peacekeepers were the main importers and dealers of arms and drugs, and often they were helped by regional administrations and police on the Georgian side (Kukhianidze et al., 2004, p.36).

The Rose Revolution decreased arms trafficking in Georgia (Kupatadze, 2005, p.69). However, the Georgian authorities could do nothing with the conflict escalation in South Ossetia and the consequent increase in the passage of arms through the Roki tunnel in South Ossetia (Kupatadze, 2005, p.69).

In South Ossetia, there was the production of opium, especially in the Kvaisi and Java districts, mainly for use in Russia and the rest of Georgia (Kukhianidze et al., 2004, p.36).

3.3.   Terrorism in de facto states

As it concerns terrorism, *de facto* states are perfect for the proliferation of MOBs or armed groups, as their international legal status resembles those of a "black hole". However, it is quite difficult to assess precisely the existence in it of terroristic cells, as there are not so much reliable data or reports about such topic. In this field, for simplicity, I will also consider criminals that flow into such territories, to escape the law of sovereign states, as in *de facto* states there is no mandate for extradition. This is because the international community does not recognize them, and thus does not allow efficient usage of instruments like for example INTERPOL in capturing criminals.

Terrorism instead, is a topic of primary concern especially in the Caucasus, as I will show in the next few pages. Terroristic cells, especially in the 1990s and in the early 2000s used the Caucasus regions as training camps, and consequently, South Ossetia and Abkhazia were territories in which arms, weapons, and drugs were sold and trafficked for terrorists (Kupatadze, 2005; Kukhianidze et al., 2004).

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

It is difficult to assess precisely the terroristic activities present on the northern part of the island. However, it can be said that since the 2000s the Turkish Cypriot-administrated area cooperated with the Republic of Cyprus in specific counterterrorism objectives (U.S. Department of State, 2007). They shuttered the First Merchant Bank when they received evidence of illicit financial activities, but at the same time throughout the decades, they lacked all the technologies that were necessary to prevent in almost its entirety money flows related to criminals and terrorists (U.S. Department of State, 2007).

There is no evidence of the training of terrorists within the territory of TRNC. However, due to the inability of TRNC in signing treaties, UN conventions, or international agreements of any sort, they cannot prevent in entirety the presence of money laundering in their territory, including money laundering for terroristic cells (U.S. Department of State, 2007). TRNC is often used as one of the regions where criminal groups launder their money, or often it is one of the main roads for the entering into European Union of cash flows.

TRNC continues to be a haven for all the criminals and persons that are under the mandate for arrest in sovereign states. One of the most prominent cases was the one with Asil Nadir, in May 1993 (Pegg, 1998, p.5). Asil Nadir was the former head of Polly Peck International, and he fled to TRNC to avoid serious fraud charges in the United Kingdom and knowing perfectly that there were not any extradition treaties between UK and TRNC (Pegg, 1998, p.5).

Abkhazia and South Ossetia

There is no evidence of the presence of Abkhazia's soil of terroristic cells. However, it can be said that Abkhazia was used as one of the entrances of arms into the Georgian soil, to be brought to the Chechens fighters present in the Pankisi Gorge region (Kupatadze, 2005, Kukhianidze et al, 2004; Dvali, 2003). Another interesting aspect is the fact that during the conflict of the early 90s, one of the commanders in chief of the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus forces was Shamil Basayev. Shamil Basayev in the following year became one of the Chechen terrorists that conducted many terrorist attacks

on Russian Federation soil, such as the one at the Dubrovka theater in 2002, or the one at the Beslan school in 2004.

Another aspect that is important to mention is the situation in Abkhazia regarding weapons of mass distraction (WMD) proliferation. Throughout the existence of Abkhazia as a *de facto* state, there was no clear evidence of Abkhazia's involvement in WMD proliferation. However, during the Soviet period in Sukhumi, there was the I. Vekua Institute of Physics and Technology (SIPT) (Dvali, 2003). In it researches on plasma physics, and controlled fusion reactions in a tokamak were conducted (Dvali, 2003). At the end of the conflict in Abkhazia in 1993, 200 scientists abandoned Sukhumi to flee to Tbilisi, re-establishing in Tbilisi the SIPT (Dvali, 2003). The Sukhumi facilities continued to work, even without the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (Dvali, 2003). According to scientists that previously worked there, in Sukhumi, there was an isotope production reactor and fissile material (2 kg of HEU), which disappeared during the conflict (Dvali, 2003). For Georgians, all the materials that were missing were sold to terrorists in Iraq (Dvali, 2003).

From what concerns South Ossetia, there is no evidence of the presence of terroristic cells present on its soil. As in the case of Abkhazia, South Ossetia was used as the main entrance on Georgian soil for arms that were directed to the Chechen fighters during the second Chechen war (Kupatadze, 2005; Kukhianidze et al., 2004).

3.4. *Refugees and Internally Displaced People due to conflict in de facto states*

The refugees created during a conflict are one of the main concerns for the international community as a whole. Refugees often mean the neighboring countries' construction of infrastructure, and humanitarian aid to address the problem.

Refugees are defined and protected by the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951. In Article 1 it is stated that a refugee owes

> to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is

outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

(UNCHR, 1951, p.14)

Here it is interesting to note that the refugees that fled the territory of Abkhazia (mainly ethnic Georgians) are not called refugees by the Georgian authorities. However, they are officially named internally displaced people (IDPs), as in calling them "refugees", the home state will concede to the *de facto* state an implicit recognition of sovereignty. On the other hand, by calling them IDPs, there is the implicit meaning that the persons displaced moved within the same country, and not from one state to another.

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

In this case, I will consider only the displacement of the two major communities of the island – the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots – but it is still important to note that all the other minorities present on the island (Maronites, Armenians, Latin, and Roma) were involved in the consequences of the conflict.

The collapse of the Republic of Cyprus' constitution was officially terminated with the Turkish invasion of the island on July 20, 1974. During the days of the invasion, many sources say that 140.000 Greek Cypriots were forced to flee from the north of the island, while on the contrary 40.000 Turkish Cypriots were forced to move to the North and abandon their properties in the South (Loizides, 2016, p.26)

The representatives of TRNC faced the problem of housing the newcomers from the South with the expropriation of the abandoned Greek Cypriot's properties, and with their redistribution to the Turkish Cypriots from the South (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). Almost the same thing happened with the settlers from mainland Turkey that had started to arrive since the invasion of the island (Ker-Lindsay, 2011).

The level of interconnectedness between the two parts of the island was not so common for people, as there was a so-called "Green Line" that was the border, and it was highly

weaponized. Nonetheless, on the governmental part, the relations between TRNC and the Republic of Cyprus continued, under the strict surveillance of the United Nations. The relations brought Cyprus and TRNC to establish in 1981, a Committee for Missing Persons (CMP), to make light on the problem of all the persons since the conflict was missing (Loizides, 2016). However, the CMP remained unutilized until 2004 (Loizides, 2016). The architecture of CMP was designed to have a tripartite Committee within it a Greek Cypriot, a Turkish Cypriot, and a member directly appointed by the UN Secretary-General (Loizides, 2016, p.158).

The missing persons come from two different periods, one during the bicommunal hostilities of 1963 to 1974 and the other in the July – August 1974 period (Loizides, 2016, p.158). According to official figures, Turkish Cypriots suffered approximately half of their losses in the first period, on the other hand, the Greek Cypriots during the second one (Loizides, 2016, p.158).

One of the main reasons for the start of the operativity of CMP in the 2000s was the rulings of ECHR against Turkey for the problem of the expropriation of Greek Cypriots' properties in the northern part of the island (Loizides, 2016, p.162). The most famous case in this regard was the Loizidou case. In 1989, Titina Loizidou, a Greek Cypriot refugee from Kyrenia (a northern coastal town in Cyprus), was arrested by Turkish forces, as she was participating in a rally that wanted to cross the Green Line (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 55). After the detention, she decided to file against Turkey to the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that Turkey had deprived her of control of her properties. She appealed to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which stated under the title of *Right to respect for private and family life* that:

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.

2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

<div align="right">(European Convention on Human Rights, 1951, p.11)</div>

Turkey rejected the claims made by Mrs. Loizidou on two premises (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.56). Firstly, Turkey argued that it cannot be held responsible for the action of TRNC, as Turkey considers TRNC an independent state (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.56). Secondly, Turkey argued that TRNC had previously enacted laws that caused expropriation of the Mrs. Loizidou's properties, making her claims non-sustainable (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.56). Both claims made by Turkey were rejected by ECHR. On 19 December 1996, ECHR ruled that Ankara was ultimately responsible for the actions perpetrated on TRNC soil and that Turkey was ordered to pay several hundred thousand dollars in compensation to Mrs. Loizidou (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p.56).

This was a watershed decision that allowed lawsuits from every other Greek Cypriot refugee to complain about the expropriation of properties made after the conflict (Loizides, 2016, p.56). Initially, Turkey rejected the ECHR ruling and was not intended to pay the compensation, but at the same time that meant a freezing of Turkey's status in the EU accession, as compliance with ECHR rulings is a basic requirement for membership (Loizides, 2016, p.56). However, in 2003 Turkey decided to pay the compensation to Mrs. Loizidou, as long as to other Greek Cypriots that appealed to ECHR.

The ECHR cases and the involvement of relatives of missing persons have created assumptions for the revival of CMP and its consequent functioning since 2004 (Loizides, 2016). Since 2004, the CMP started to explore the past of both communities and the inter-ethnic violence that occurred between them, and this successful bicommunal project has shown how cooperation is possible, even if the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders cannot reach an overall agreement on the legal status of all the island (Loizides, 2016, pp.154-155). The CMP has also served as a tool 'in negotiations to build trust and credible expectations among key actors for future mediations' (Loizides, 2016, p.168).

Abkhazia

Abkhazia during the conflict in the 90s was immersed in inter-ethnic violence. In the case of Georgia and the territory of Abkhazia, the United Nations established the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).

During the conflict, both the Abkhazian military and Georgian militaries were found guilty of ethnic cleansing. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of uprooted people by the conflict is 300.000 (Mooney, 1996, p.201). The humanitarian crisis that followed the conflict, do not comprehend only ethnic Georgians or ethnic Abkhaz, also the other minorities present on the territories were victims (Greek, Armenian, Russian) (Mooney, 1996, p.202).

In 2010, it was estimated that in the Republic of Georgia, there were between 247.000 and 249.000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), according to IDMC, as cited by Kabachnik, Regulska, and Mitchneck (2010, p.1). Until the Five-Day War of 2008, the majority of IDPs came from Abkhazia (Kabachnik et al., 2010, pp.1-2). Nearly 6 percent of Georgia's population is displaced, all of them living near the two *de facto* states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, hoping for a future return to their native homes (Kabachnik et al., 2010, p.2).

South Ossetia

The South Ossetian-Georgian conflict in the 90s has seen the vast majority of Ossetians that flew from the South up to the northern part of Ossetia, which is formally part of the Russian Federation.

On the other side, the Five-Day War in 2008 also displaced people. According to a gap analysis conducted by UNCHR:

> Reportedly the total number of persons displaced during the August conflict reached 138 000 out of which around 108,600 persons returned to their places of origin while approximately 30, 000 remained to face possible long-term displacement.

<div align="right">(UNCHR, 2009, p.5)</div>

3.5. *Possibility of a war restarting*

In this part, I would like to assess if there is a possibility for a war restarting in the regions of the *de facto* states. When we consider *de facto* states, they are quite often defined as

"frozen conflict", an implicit statement for the fact that a possible future conflict could occur.

For the case of TRNC, I will try to see what are the home state and the *de facto* state's relations. To do so, I will consider the relations between Greece and Turkey, what changed with the entrance of Cyprus into the EU, and how this has served to ease the tensions between the Greek and Turkish communities. For the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it is interesting to note what was the impact of the Five-Day War in 2008 and how this has overturned the fears of inhabitants of *de facto* states towards the home state. Then, I will consider all the actions that were undertaken by the key patron, to exert pressure upon the Tbilisi government.

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

The case of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus differs hugely from the other *de facto* states. Firstly, there were different periods in which a settlement – with decisive UN mediations – was almost reached. The periods in question are the following: 1984-1986, 1992, and 2002-2004 (Loizides, 2016, pp.27-28). However, agreements were never reached or for ultimate refusal made by one of the two counterparts, or in the case of the 2000s for the failure of the referendum. Secondly, the two "motherlands" of Greece and Turkey, came close to an armed confrontation in 1977, 1987, and 1996 (Loizides, 2016, pp.27-28). However, those tensions never brought to a confrontation, also since Greece and Turkey are part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and all the necessary means were taken to prevent their confrontation.

The two reasons mentioned above can explain how it is important the involvement of the international community in the affairs of *de facto* states prevents a renewal of violence and war.

In the case of Cyprus, another fundamental aspect has to be considered, which is the formal entrance of the Republic of Cyprus into the European Union in 2004. As was already mentioned in the second chapter, the entrance of Cyprus into the EU created – involuntarily – the assumptions for the easing of the Green Line in 2003. This has allowed Turkish Cypriots to travel to the south, and vice-versa the Greek Cypriots to come to visit the northern part, after almost 30 years.

According to Loizides (2016), another legal aspect that has to be considered here is the fact that

> the benefits of EU membership applied mostly to the Greek Cypriot community. The northern part remained officially part of the EU, but the *acquis communautaire* (European body of law) did not apply to the areas outside the control of the Republic of Cyprus. The majority of Turkish Cypriots maintained citizenship in the Republic of Cyprus and were entitled to travel and work in Europe, but the northern part of the island could not initiate direct trade with or flights to third countries.
>
> (Loizides, 2016, p.31)

All the aspects show that a future war is unlikely, as it will not be in the interests of both parties, the home state and the *de fact*o states. It is more likely to see a future re-rapprochement of the two communities. Currently, there are not any peace talks ongoing.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Here, I will consider both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as they follow a similar path, as Russia uses them to hinder Georgia's potential eligibility and compatibility with NATO and the European Union's standards.

Russia does so with three different instruments (Souleimanov et al., 2017):

- Military deployments

- Passportization

- Responsibility to protect (R2P)[6]

The first instrument is the deployment of military troops on *de facto* state soil. This instrument exists in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, but also in Transnistria and it was imposed

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[6] Responsibility to Protect is a new international norm that started to exist right after the atrocities occurred during the 1990s, like in the case of the former Yugoslavia or Rwanda. It was introduced to prevent genocides and ethnic cleansing.

after the ceasefire in the zone of conflicts (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.6). This instrument is aimed to serve Russia's regional interests (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.6). The UN peacekeeping mission in Abkhazia was composed almost exclusively of Russian peacekeeping forces, and it was considered a positive one by the UN Security Council Resolution I 1994 (S/RES/896) and which stated:

> Welcomes the continued efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, in cooperation with the Chairman-in-Office of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and with the assistance of the Government of the Russian Federation as facilitator, to carry forward the peace process with the aim of achieving an overall political settlement, and welcomes in particular the progress achieved so far.

> (UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/896, 1994, p.2)

The same process took place in South Ossetia two years earlier, with the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF), which was made up of three battalions under Russian command, composed of Russians, Georgians, and North Ossetians (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.7). Since then, the Russian military contingent started to be based in the two breakaway regions, repelling a potential Georgian attack to regain the territories. This tool was fundamental to keep Georgia vulnerable to Moscow, and it did not allow Georgia to compose efficiently its army, making NATO membership impossible (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.8).

The second instrument became Passportization, which means the issuance of Russian passports to all the residents of the breakaway regions who want them (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.8). The period in which most of the passports were distributed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia was 2002-2008 (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.8). The consequent presence of Russian citizens in *de facto* states created an opportunity for Russia to increase its direct control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia's territories, and at the same time weaken Georgia's authority in them (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.10).

Moreover:

> The passportization factor was efficiently used by Moscow on the eve of the South Ossetian war, providing it with a pretext of defending its own citizens

and enabling it to intervene in Georgia via the Responsibility to Protect concept advanced and accepted by the United Nations.

(Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.10)

The third instrument is the consequence of the passportization process, adopted in the two breakaway regions (Souleimanov et al., 2017). Under international law, the R2P allows the use of force in retaliation for an attack against their citizens. Then, Russia to justify its military incursions in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, appealed to the role of its military peacekeeping forces to prevent Georgia's aggression against Russia's citizens. Russia also used the umbrella of responsibility to protect in the wake of the Five-Day War in 2008, and it not only contrasted Georgia in South Ossetia, but it also entered invaded Georgia. It can be argued that 'using passportization to establish tangible, influential instruments, Russian policy-makers adeptly instrumentalized the de facto states by exploiting a mechanism of international law' (Souleimanov et al., 2017, p.11).

To summarize the five categories that I have analyzed above I will use two different tables, one for TRNC and another for both Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

For how it concerns TRNC (Table VII):

Table VII: presence in TRNC of threats to international security

	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
General criminality	Selling of certain duty-free goods, like cigarettes and tobacco, through the Green Line
Aggravated criminality	Traces of human trafficking in the sex industry and in the drugs industry
Terrorism	No effective presence of terrorism, but on the other hand TRNC is often used as an escape for criminals, from the national or international justice

Refugees or IDPs	Huge displacement of peoples (both Greek and Turkish Cypriots) occurred during the 1970s. Since then, few of them could return to their properties
Possibility of a war restarting	Highly unplausible, due to the international community mediation between the Republic of Cyprus and TRNC

How it concerns the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Table VIII):

Table VIII: Presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia of threats to international security

	Abkhazia	South Ossetia
General criminality	The goods illegally traded during the 1990s and the early 2000s: non-ferrous metals, cigarettes, flour, gasoline, wine, citruses, timber, scrap iron, and hazelnuts	The goods illegally traded during the 1990s and the early 2000s: cigarettes, fuel, wheat flour, and various nutritional products
Aggravated criminality	Smuggling of arms, drugs, and stolen cars	Smuggling of arms, drugs, and stolen cars
Terrorism	No effective presence of terrorism on Abkhazia soil. However, many arms passed through Abkhazia and were sold to terrorists during the 90s and the Early 2000s.	No effective presence of terrorism on South Ossetia soil. However, many arms passed through South Ossetia and were sold to terrorists during the 90s and the Early 2000s

	The alleged presence of smuggling of weapons of mass distraction (WMD)	
Refugees or IDPs	Creations of more than a hundred thousand IDPs, especially ethnic Georgians, due to the ethnic cleansing policies perpetrated by both sides of the conflict	During the two conflicts (the one in the 90s and the one in 2008), thousands of od Ossetians and thousands of Georgians were forced to abandon their properties
Possibility of a war restarting	It is not clear if a war restarting could occur. However, it is important to note the strategies that the Russian Federation perpetrated on Abkhazia soil to secure its influence over Georgia (military deployment of troops, passportization, and R2P).	It is not clear if a war restarting could occur. However, it is important to note the strategies that the Russian Federation perpetrated on South Ossetia soil to secure its influence over Georgia (military deployment of troops, passportization, and R2P).

CONCLUSION

After having analyzed the five different threat assessments and their presence or not in de facto states activities, I now will talk about the outcome.

In the first chapter, I have created the basis for the discussion on de facto states, with the consideration of the concepts of sovereignty and security, and with the delineation of the *de facto* states' main characteristics. In the second chapter, I have considered all the actors involved in de facto states affairs, and the main events that occurred before, during, and after the formation of de facto states. In the third chapter, I analyzed the presence of general criminality, aggravated criminality, terrorism, refugees, and IDPS, and the possibility of a war restarting. Bearing all this in mind, it is possible now to trace a clearer picture of international security, and how *de facto* states affect it.

The first outcome of my research is the fact that these entities create security threats to other states, as their very existence destabilizes the world based on sovereign order. However, it is always important to mention that they have their internal justification for their existence, and the secessionist elites of *de facto* states have legitimization in the eyes of their citizens since they have created – during their existence – institutions, welfare systems, and many other things that a sovereign state has to have.

It is important to differentiate also between the cases of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This is due not only to the different regions that these territories affect but also to the extent of the international community's involvement in their affairs.

TRNC is the most ancient *de facto* state alive. It has seen international community involvement since the first formation of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. Since then, the UN was always involved, and many attempts at a settlement through the UN Security Council were made. Even if they never succeeded, they still have "frozen" the ethnic disputes. Other organizations entered into relations with TRNC, as in the case of EC (the now European Union). The case of the EU is unique. TRNC inhabitants are indirectly considered EU citizens. TRNC has unofficial offices in Brussels, and it is in contact with the EU institutions.

All this international involvement in TRNC's affairs has limited the general criminality on the island, and it had created de facto state accommodation towards the EU requests.

The interconnectedness of TRNC with other institutions like the EU, the UN, and NATO have not created a solution for the territorial disputes, but at the same time, it has created more stable conditions for both Greek and Turkish communities.

In the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the picture is quite different. The two unrecognized states have seen a huge Russian Federation involvement in their affairs. In 2009, the UN mission in both the unrecognized states was canceled, after Russia vetoed it at the UN Security Council level. They had seen a huge proliferation in the 1990s and early 2000s of general criminality and aggravated criminality, that harmed both Georgia and the other states in the region, as well as the states in other parts of the world. Even if they have not been zones in which terroristic cells proliferated, they still were used as an entry road for the smuggling of arms aimed at Chechen fighters in the Pankisi Gorge. Another concern comes from the WMD as I illustrated. All the Soviet facilities and their unutilized materials were sold, without the surveillance of international organs.

In the case of the two unrecognized states in the Caucasus, it is important to consider also the IPDs situation, after thirty years after the conflict. According to Kabachnik P., Regulska J., and Mitchneck B. (2010), Georgia had almost 250.000 IDPs on its soil, caused by the conflict in Abkhazia (1991-1993), and South Ossetia (1991-1992 and 2008).

However, the major threat to Georgia, and consequently to the international community, is the Russian Federation's activities on the soils of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The military presence and the passportization process have created a sense of insecurity in Georgian political and daily life. Russian Federation with its activity aims to exert power toward Georgia, to avoid a closer approach of the latter with the so-called institutions. Russia has already shown during the Five-Day War that it can intervene militarily if Russia decides to.

Also, in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the international security problem regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia cannot be underestimated. The international community has to be more participant in Caucasus *de facto* states affairs, to secure the region from future invalid annexations or future wars.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the case of TRNC, even if an agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and TRNC is not reached, is a good example of how the continuous presence of TRNC in the international political discourses brought a concrete avoidance

of international insecurity in that particular region. On the other hand, the lack of presence of discourses around Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the international discourses continues to be an international security problem, due to the Russian Federation's actions in the last decades.

To conclude, it can be said that *de facto* states represent a threat to international security, particularly concerning the actions that the key patron exerts over these territories, and consequently pose a threat to the home state security, and to the broader extent of the international security.

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