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Teaching Notes for CHAPTER 3: The Declarations of Independence: The Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic

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TEACHING NOTES

The Declarations of Independence: The Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic

Rudy L. Hightower II*

The Declarations of Independence tells the story of two lifelong, middle-aged friends who are on opposite, ethnically divided sides of a sovereignty issue facing their homeland, known locally as Pridnestrovie. Not recognized by the majority of the International Community, Pridnestrovie must decide between fighting for independence and peaceful reunification with Moldova. Yet, either course of action could lead to perennially tense co-existence between Pridnestrovians and Moldavans. The case study addresses several recurring factors found in most sovereignty disputes, such as ethnicity, history, international credibility and recognition, military conflicts, language, and culture.

Potential Uses of the Case

This case study investigates regional security and territorial sovereignty issues and discusses multinational security, stability, transition, and reconstruction operations. The case study will plunge upper division and graduate university students into the complexities of Black Sea “Frozen Conflict” resolution, ethnic separatism, minority rights, and the definitions and application of sovereignty rights.

Potential Audience for the Case

This case study is designed to interest students from a wide variety of academic majors and career disciplines. University students in political science, public affairs, and international relations majors will undoubtedly form the majority of enrollees. However, students from Slavic and Eastern European area studies, international economics, history, and other social sciences are also expected to show interest in such a program. Additionally, members of the Department of Defense, State Department, or U.S. Agency for International Development will find the case study beneficial to their future career.

Teaching Objectives

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Specifically, the *Declarations of Independence* case study learning objectives are designed to provide students with

- an understanding of the causes of state degeneration and failure, as well as the ingredients that purportedly lead to vibrant democracy;
- a mechanism to study real-world ethnic and separatist conflicts and their resulting effect in creating refugee-based humanitarian crises;
- a means to study the multidisciplinary, noncombat operations required in peacekeeping, medical support, resettlement of refugees, and other noncombat operations; and
- a method of evaluating a potential real-world crisis and requiring students to make time-critical, crisis management decisions.

Case Description/Synopsis of the Case

Declarations of Independence is a case study designed to present organizational theory principles and practices that specifically focus on national and international bureaucracies, institutions, organizational structure, and functions.

Basic Dilemmas and Issue(s)

Why would international decisionmakers (UN, EU, USA) ignore one people's adherence to established Westphalian and Helsinki Accords self-determination rules yet validate another people's unilateral declaration of independence, such as the one that separated Kosovo from Serbia?

Declaring independence does not equate to independence gained. Acceptance by the international community does/does not determine valid declarations of independence.

Opening Questions

What makes a state a state? Government, constitution, armed forces. . . . Is the PMR, therefore, a state?

Are the criteria defined above the same criteria used by external actors?

Questions

What does Vitali—of Ukrainian descent—want?

Is his Ukrainian background important?

What does Mihai—Moldavian—want?

What about the other parties?

- Moldavia: Territorial integrity free of Russia; admission to CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe), EU

- PMR: Maintain connection to Russian/Ukrainian character
- Russia: Hold back the push from the West
- Ukrainians: Access to the Black Sea; admission to CSCE, EU And what of the international parties?

Concluding Questions

Is there a difference in effect between the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Agression Pact and what the PMR proposes today? What options are open to the PMR?

If you represented the PMR, what would you do?

Perhaps here the class can break into small groups: What would you [PMR, Moldova, Russia/Ukraine, EU, US] do?

Has the end of the Cold War changed the way states see and react to each other? Russia acts to protect its interests in this region. Does the United States not do this as well, in support of the war in Afghanistan? Does the U.S. presence in Uzbekistan, for example, help or hinder democratic development there? Does the U.S. presence imply “international recognition” of Uzbekistan? What defines independence, territorial integrity? Internationally recognized borders, ethnic density?

Suggested Student Assignments

Research a sovereignty conflict, whether land based or oceanic, and present a one- to two-page, point-counterpoint argument on the issue.

Suggested Additional Readings or References

Bahcheli, Tozun, Barry Bartmann, and Henry Srebrnik, eds. 2004. *De Facto States: The Quest for Sovereignty*. New York: Routledge Publishers.

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Shelest, Hanna. 2009. "Unresolved Conflicts' Impact on the National and Regional Security in the Black Sea Region." In *The Black Sea Region: A Security Minefield or a Partnership Road? Intra-regional Perspectives on Black Sea Affairs*. Ukraine National Institute of Strategic Studies Discussion Papers #4.

West, Rebecca. 1937. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*. New York: Penguin Books.

Computer and Multimedia Support

Multimedia support for this teaching case is minimal. However, a short video on the 2008–2010 Russia-Georgia War would be a useful teaching resource to emphasize that sovereignty conflicts are life-and-death issues.