



Transnistria in the Russia-Ukraine War

For Prelims: Location of Transnistria & Moldova in the Russia-Ukraine War, European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

For Mains: Russia-Ukraine War, Bilateral Groupings & Agreements, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests

Why in News?

As the [Russia-Ukraine War](#) completes over two months, **Transnistria**, the tiny breakaway region of **Moldova**, risks being dragged into the conflict.

- **Transnistria is a de facto state** lying between **Moldova to its west and Ukraine towards its east.**



Tensions in Transnistria

The small region wedged between Moldova to its west and Ukraine to its east risks being dragged into the ongoing conflict

TRANSNISTRIA FACTFILE

- Split from Moldova in 1991-92 war, amid collapse of the Soviet Union. Becomes a self-declared independent state not recognised internationally
- Referendum in 2006 saw 97.2% vote in favour of joining Russia
- Its a separatist region that permanently hosts estimated 1,500 Russian "peacekeeping" troops
- Population: **4,70,000**
- Area: **4,000 sq km**

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Apr 25-27, 2022: Transnistria officials claim series of incidents:

- Explosions hit state security HQ in Tiraspol. Separatist authorities blame Ukrainian "infiltrators"
- Blasts at Mayak radio centre damage Soviet-era masts used to broadcast Russian news
- Attack on military unit in village of Parcani, just outside Tiraspol
- Shots fired from Ukraine towards Kolbasna village, location of large Russian arms depot



■ **Russia could use flare-up of tensions as pretext for invasion. If Russia reinforces Transnistria, it might then move on to Ukraine's key port city of Odesa**

What is Transnistria's History?

- Transnistria is described as a "**remnant of the Soviet Union**", Transnistria declared independence like Moldova did soon after the break-up of the Soviet Union.
- When Moldovan troops attempted to take over the territory in **1990-1992**, Transnistria was able to **resist them because of Russian soldiers based in Transnistria**.
 - Since then, it has **remained free of Moldovan control**.
- However, most countries continue to see Transnistria as part of Moldova. It is **not recognized as independent even by Russia**.
- Most Transnistrians have **dual citizenship** of Russia and Transnistria or **triple citizenship** of Moldova, Transnistria, and Russia.

- Its economy is dependent on **Russia for subsidies and free gas.**
- It has its **own government (which is pro-Russian), Parliament, armed force, constitution, flag, anthem, etc.**
 - In a referendum held in 2006, over **97% of Transnistrians voted for future integration with Russia** and after the **annexation of Crimea**, the government asked if it could be absorbed into Russia.

What is the Strategic Importance of Transnistria for Russia?

- Transnistria's strategic location is important to the **next phase of Russia's war on Ukraine.**
- There are fears in the West and in **Ukraine that Transnistria** could be used as a staging ground in the **conflict between Russia and Ukraine.**
- Russia might use Transnistria to **cut off the southwestern corner of Ukraine**, leading to direct Russian intervention inside Moldova.
 - If Transnistria comes under Russian control, it will **enable Russia to create a Russian-controlled corridor along Ukraine's Black Sea coast.**
 - If Russia succeeds in linking the **Black Sea port of Odessa with Transnistria**, the rest of Ukraine would become completely landlocked.
- Moldova, on its part, fears that Russia will use Transnistria to launch an attack on it as Russia has long wanted **Moldova to be in its sphere of influence.**
 - Moldova is **not a member of the [European Union](#) & [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#).**
 - So, there is little chance of NATO **coming to its rescue, particularly since NATO** cannot give membership to countries which have border disputes with other countries.

[Source: TH](#)

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