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.
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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

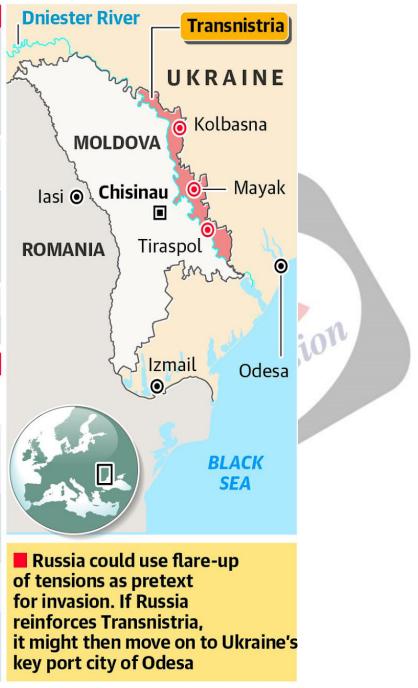
Apr 25-27, 2022: Transnistria officials claim series of incidents:

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



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 Russiancontrolled 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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