



# RUSSIA AND GEORGIA

The ways out of the crisis



GLOBAL  
PARTNERSHIP  
FOR THE  
PREVENTION  
OF ARMED  
CONFLICT

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**International Center on Conflict and Negotiation**

# **Russia and Georgia**

## **The Ways Out of the Crisis**

**George Khutsishvili and Tina Gogueliani**  
**(Editors)**

Tbilisi  
2010

# Russia and Georgia: The Ways out of the Crisis

Edited by George Khutsishvili and Tina Gogueliani

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## **Editor's Preface**

Present collection of the articles represents a certain outcome of the two-year development of so-called Istanbul Process, an initiative that was started right after the August war of 2008 with support from the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and aimed at creating a space for facilitated meetings of independent Russian and Georgian experts to discuss various aspects of the current Russia-Georgia crisis and the ways out of it. The meetings are held on neutral soil, in Istanbul, which is why the project is called the Istanbul Process. All the authors of the book belong to the participants of the project meetings.

Not all the aspects of Russian-Georgian problem can possibly be comprised within the frame of one book. It is rather a topic for a broad multi-profile research paper, or even a series of papers, not attempted as yet. Furthermore, even if such a complex and profound research work appears, it is highly doubtful that it can get an adequate assessment in current circumstances characterized by polarized views of the same subject, politicized evaluations and positions, and pain from the recent wounds. It is commonly assumed that only from a historical distance and by someone else may it be possible to conceive and assess the issue part of which we ourselves are. However, an attempt to approach this 'impossible mission' should be done today.

The book introduces to the reader an excellent team of authors widely known for their scholarly works, as well as civil and journalistic activities. The chapters sparkle with ideas and insights, and we sincerely hope that reading this book will be a genuine pleasure for the reader. All the articles were written specially for this publication, and independently from each other, with the exception of the chapter written by Yazkova and Khaindrava that has been developed as a joint work of the two authors. As we live in a dynamic time, we should keep in mind that all the articles were written in the period before the summer, or before the fall of 2010 at latest. If a quote or a reference to a later event appears, this may only be an insertion or correction made at a finalizing stage of editing, right before submitting the manuscript for publishing.

The reader will note and may be even be puzzled by the fact that the majority of authors deem it necessary to commence with a historical overview of the Russia-Georgia relations or even a broader background of the issues at stake. The editing team has approached this aspect of its task in a liberal manner, and did not limit the authors by strictly fitting them into a certain overall structural composition of the book. How the authors themselves choose to develop their argumentation was much more important than the architectural perfection of the book structure.

Different authors put forward different interpretations of the factors that have led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and conditioned the whole tapestry of modern relations and interactions in the conflict areas of the post-Soviet space. In an attempt to explain this process, Sakvarelidze even develops a peculiar neo-Malthusian hypothesis. The book completes with the article of Andrey Piontkovsky reflecting an utter concern about the political tendencies in the governance of Russia. An extremely sharpened question in the title of his article may be considered as a final chord of the entire appalling picture of power phenomena described in the book, as well as an invitation to the next round of discussion that is destined to unfold (another prediction?) in relation to the topics in question.

George Khutsishvili

*Ramaz Sakvarelidze*

## **Russia and Georgia: Myths and Reality**

In the given article the reader will not find any unknown facts or documents concerning Russia-Georgia relations. On the contrary, they will find well-known facts. However, the way of their presentation will enable us to construct a hypothetical model of the political motivation of both parties to uncover the logic of Georgian-Russian controversial relations after the disintegration of the USSR.

Political motivation is the most hidden component of the political process and is often masked by rhetoric. We, as spectators of the political stage, often supply the details to what is hidden behind the theatrical decorations, out of our imagination. As a result of this, political myths emerge that control the consciousness of millions of people. Those myths lose their power only after rationality starts to dominate the perception of political processes. Since Georgia-Russia relations are abundant with myths, which have already made a real mess of things, the search for the perspective for the rational analysis of the process becomes most topical, indeed. Some problems and paradoxes of our political fate also urge us to be rational.

The questions started to emerge already in the past. I will single out the most important of them: Why did the USSR collapse? The answers to this question could be the following. The Soviet Union collapsed because of the political and economic inefficiency of the regime, because it was defeated in the competition with the West, and, also, because of the inner political pressure resulting from the national-liberation movement in all the republics. If we decide to be critical, we can find a number of

counter-arguments: The Soviet Union had been inefficient, weak and a loser in economic competition for 70 years, and its weakness did not at all reach its peak in the 1990s. There are much weaker regimes that are able to continue their existence (e.g. Cuba). As for the national-liberation movement, its simultaneous occurrence in all the republics requires a separate explanation. There is also another inexplicable fact to mention: The regime which suppressed with Soviet tanks a similar movement in Hungary and Czechoslovakia for the coming decades, in the 1990s limited itself to the dispersal of protest marches in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Vilnius. After that the repressive machine stopped. What is even more surprising is that in several months time following these short-term repressions, the authorities organized the first multi-party elections, where the repressed acted as official participants. Thus, the events of that period are not quite understandable, if we assume that the authorities wanted to preserve the Union, but were unable to do so. But maybe their motivation was very different? Maybe they wanted to dismantle the empire? We will consider this version a bit later, but before that let's make an assessment of the above mentioned explanations.

Logical inconsistencies make us think that the explanations of USSR disintegration offered above do not result from rational analysis, but from the stereotypes and myths fed by our past years' emotions. We all find it pleasant to discover that a cruel dictator we used to be scared of is actually a feeble-minded person (like Chaplin's genius has shown in his famous film). In short, myths are good for emotions, whereas the actual solution of problems is impossible without real questions and answers. The processes behind the main issues (e.g. ethnic conflicts) have led us to numerous problems including the problem of Georgian-Russian relations. Today, we have new problems along with the old ones.

At present, Georgia-Russia relations are known as the most acute conflict in the entire post-Soviet space. It is difficult not to agree with that. What we observe is aggressive rhetoric from both sides, armed provocations, Russia's invasion of Georgia, destruction of the military infrastructure, recognition of the independence of two separatist regions and the opening of military bases on their territories. If we also think of Russia's role in the outbreak and freezing of the so-called ethnic conflicts on the territory of Georgia, we will arrive at the conclusion that the armed confrontation is nothing more than the continuation of Russia's aggressive policy after the disintegration of the USSR. The EU Mission headed by Heidi Tagliavini arrived just at this kind of conclusion. This did not surprise anyone in Russia, Georgia or Europe. Expected things are never surprising. The conclusion like this was very much expected, because everyone explained the Georgia-Russia conflict by the little Georgia's striving for independence which is hindered by Russia, a country with imperial ambitions. As this model easily fits into the well-known myth about the fight between David and Goliath (a comparison made by a top official of Georgia in his speech), the situation becomes quite understandable. No additional questions arise.

But the thing is that the given myth is inconsistent with other facts. Georgian authorities open the door wide to the Russian capital which already controls relatively important objects in Georgia. Such a policy was pursued even after the August war. The preparation of transfer of the biggest power station on the Inguri river, earlier operated jointly by Georgians and Abkhazians, to Russian businessmen, have become a well known fact. If we take into consideration that politicians in Russia do not make concessions to businessmen and oblige them to act in defense of the political interests of the country, privatization in favor of Russian business could be perceived as annexation of Georgia by Russia. This is supported by the fact that the Russian authorities do not put obstacles to this kind of Russian-Georgian business. Another interesting point is that this kind of Georgian economic policy is not hindered by the US, either. It only reacts to the possibility of privatizing the pipelines transporting energy carriers. How can we explain such a paradoxical policy? It seems that Georgia-Russia relations need to be labeled depending on the context, i.e. as cooperation (though for the benefit of Russia, only) at the economic level and confrontation – at the political level. How shall we deal with the myth about David and Goliath then? The newly emerged questions imply that the myth has to be replaced. Another question is “Replaced with what?” The old interpretation is controversial, whereas the new one is nonexistent. It seems it should be searched for. At the same time, a search for new explanations always makes us start everything from the very beginning, go back to the old questions, i.e. to the question put forward above. Let’s try to follow this prescription.

At the beginning of the XX century the Russian empire transformed into the USSR. This new empire was different from the old one in the following respect: it did not have any ethnic identity (e.g. was not called Russian). An explanation could be that the 1917 revolution was organized by the representatives of national minorities and it did not suit them to retain the current status. They built a country where there were no representatives of any national minorities. Formally, the new empire did not actually belong to any of the nations. All the ethnic groups and the corresponding states had equal rights. When being a part of the USSR, Russia played the most important role only informally and paid a high prize for its shattered status. But the representatives of the other republics, if they were smart enough, had the opportunity to appropriate the empire’s wealth (and the empire itself) and pay Russians with myths about the ‘big brother’ or ‘the great Russian people.’ I think that the disintegration of the Soviet Union after several generations was a logical necessity, resulting from the principle of equality between its peoples.

Here are three well-known truths that have caught my attention: 1) We all know that the Soviet Union relied on the army; 2) We all know that because of the principle of multinationality, the composition of the army was also multinational; 3) We all know that Muslims bear more children than Russians. Stemming from these assumptions, I will try to construct a hypothetical model of the current events while relying

solely on logic. I will not base myself on other facts, but will point where those facts support my hypothesis.

The fourth truth results from the above three and has the following content: the share of Muslims in the army would gradually increase. The Islamization of the army would finally result in the Muslims' control of the Soviet Union, i.e. the demographic leverage would smoothly transform the Soviet Union into a country dominated by Muslims, where Russians would become the second sort citizens in their own former 'empire'. Theoretically, nothing hindered the implementation of like scenario. A high probability of such a development of events is a logical basis for all the further reasoning, as the possibility of losing control over the Russian army would outbalance any other political or economic arguments.

It is difficult to assume that Russia would not notice demographic changes in the army or the related possibility of losing control over the Soviet Union. And if it did notice all that, it would not, of course, quietly observe the development of like events. They say that the mentioned possibility was realized in Moscow in the Andropov period. Arithmetical calculations also showed that by the 90s, the top generals of the Soviet army would have been mainly Muslim. We can logically conclude, that in that period, Moscow started planning this scenario to save Russia from its future marginalization.

In any country like scenarios are developed by special services. We can assume that this one was also developed by high-echelon staff of the KGB, by the structure composed of most intelligent, statehood-minded and ethnically Russian people. There was enough time to think over all the further steps and consequences.

To free the armed forces from Muslim demographic pressure, the only logical solution would be to dismantle the Soviet Union. This would make it possible to ensure the composition of Russia's armed forces with the citizens of this country only (This kind of scenario also solved many other problems: preservation of Russia's resources, transforming Russia into a political subject at the international arena, etc.). Consequently, the special services had to develop a scenario of USSR disintegration. But this was to be done intelligently, so that Russia survived the 'tragedy of the century' with minimal losses.

However, losses were very likely to occur. In case of the disintegration of the USSR Russia would face two types of risk: economic and geopolitical. Moscow controlled the entire Soviet property in the Soviet Union. If Russia openly offered everyone to go home, the republics would demand their own share of property and Russia would incur economic losses. Moscow also controlled the policy in the socialist space using its military forces. With the disintegration of the USSR, the legal basis for the use of force would also disappear, i.e. the geographical territory of Russia's political influence would also narrow. At the same time, Russia was not be able to replace economic influence with political influence to compete with the West. Therefore, the dismantling

of the Soviet Union could also bring geopolitical losses.

The task of the authors of the scenario described above (could be called ‘Disintegration of the USSR with Minimal Losses’) was difficult, but not unmanageable. Economic losses would be excluded from the version where the republics voluntarily fled the Soviet shared apartment (When a house catches fire the people run out to save themselves and never remember the property they have left behind). So, what they needed was ‘a fire’. To maintain control of the USSR space, the outbreak of armed conflicts (‘a fire belt around Russia’) would be absolutely enough. It is risky for western capital to enter the conflict zone, but, as a peacemaker, Russia can enter this zone with its own capital and military forces (not to restore the Soviet Union, but to maintain geopolitical influence, which is not the same). Logically, there were no other moves Russia could make in that period. That is why I believe that the events behind the political decorations of the 90s followed approximately this kind of scenario.

To successfully implement the scenario (‘Disintegration... with a fire’) full confidentiality was needed, so, the scenario might have been kept secret even from the Politburo members. They also needed key figures both in Russia and in the Republics. These were to be the persons that had gained people’s trust, that could come to power and cry ‘Fire!’, and urge people to become independent from the party, Moscow, regime . . . and people would believe them. They would respond to that call if it came from the Communists respected by people (e.g. in Russia and the Asian republics), or from the former dissidents (quite a few of them came later to power, although many of them had been exposed to the controllability test in KGB basements). I think that the actors for key roles were selected according to this principle.

Let us recall the well known facts and look at them from the perspective of the proposed hypothesis. First, the referendum held in the Gorbachev period showed that the 70% of the USSR population supported the preservation of the USSR (sociology confirmed the reliability of the referendum results). If the center wanted the ‘small brothers’ to leave voluntarily (as stated in the proposed hypothesis), it would try to de-motivate the USSR people to stay in the Union. Logically enough, the leaders that started to organize protest marches against the authorities, appeared in all the republics. The authorities did not react to that in a usual aggressive way, also because the freedom of expression had already been guaranteed by glasnost policy (one of the factors of USSR disintegration). Following the wave of such liberties, meeting participants were repressed in many of the republics, which reinforced the people’s belief that the leaders of the national- liberation movement were right: You should release oneself from this bloody regime by leaving the USSR. According to my hypothesis punitive measures were aimed at forming just this kind of attitude. After reaching this objective, the government stopped further repressions (not to undermine the hope to abandon the USSR). Several months after these punitive measures, Moscow

held the first multiparty elections with the participation of those parties who were dispersed during the meetings. The fact that these political groups were allowed to participate in the elections also proves the hypothesis. This was the most appropriate move: Bringing to power those people who would save the population of some of the republics ‘from peoples’ prison’. The leaders of national-liberation movements came to power in most republics. (It is very likely that during the elections administrative resources also worked to their advantage; you have to admit, otherwise, that the USSR was an ideally democratic country). In other republics respectable party leaders turned out to be winners. After coming to power both announced the independence of their republics without even remembering their share in the Union’s economy (The proposed hypothesis implies that like oblivion is not accidental). New political elites were formed around the leaders. Due to their ‘thoughtlessness’ they provoked ethnic conflicts in many different places (according to the hypothesis such ‘thoughtlessness’ is not accidental, either).

The proposed hypotheses is well supported by key facts. In case of any other interpretation, political steps seem to lack motivation and the stupidity of the authorities is the only explanation. But if we judge by results, it becomes difficult to believe in the stupidity of those Russian people who, according to our hypothesis, created and implemented the scenario of USSR disintegration bringing the following benefits: Russia has been saved from the threats of Islamization, appropriated the whole Soviet property (zero version), and more or less maintained its power in the post-Soviet space; it no longer gives away its material resources to preserve the empire of ‘national minorities’ and when dealing with the former republics considers its own political and economic interests; it speaks on its own behalf in the international arena, declares its own interests and defends them. She has managed all this thanks to the skilful ‘disintegration’ scenario.

It should not be ruled out that not only in the republics, but also in Russia, the power was changed according to the corresponding part of this scenario. If the scenario was developed by special services, they would, naturally, take care also of themselves. First, power would be transferred to Yeltsin, who was popular with people, and then to the special services. The role of the Chechen problem in the implementation of the mentioned plan has to be also taken into consideration.

‘Collapse... without losses’ implied that Russia was supposed to maintain its influence over republics (later – independent states) for quite a long time. To be able to influence another country’s policy you should be able to influence its political elite. Russia did strive for that which can be proved by numerous examples also from Georgian experience.

Moscow indirectly helped Gamsakhurdia to come to power, which can be easily explained by the proposed hypothesis. Sobchak’s material on the tragic events of

April the 9<sup>th</sup> says that according to the center's instructions the local authorities had to give freedom to radical forces (who urged people to secede from the Soviet Union) and oppress moderate political groups. After April the 9<sup>th</sup> Gumberidze, Head of the Republic's state security, was appointed to the position of First Secretary. Elections to the Supreme Council took place during his governance. As a result of the elections the vast majority of mandates was received by Gamsakhurdia's political block, i.e. the head of state security gave the green light to a radical dissident. We should assume that this was done with Moscow's approval, since after Gamsakhurdia's victory Moscow 'rewarded' Gumberidze for his work in the Soviet Union's security structures. We should assume that Moscow's like support was not altruistic and that it would demand from Gamsakhurdia something in return. This also explains why some people in his surroundings openly cooperated with Moscow (e.g. Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Murman Omanidze).

But it seems that at a certain point Gamsakhurdia got out, for a while, of Russia's control . . . just like Dudaev. Together with him Gamsakhurdia started talking about setting up a 'common Caucasian house', which would unite the South and North Caucasus. This could not be a part of Russia's plan. In response, Moscow started to encourage Gamsakhurdia's opposition, provide it with weapons and support it to overthrow Gamsakhurdia. (By the way, Kitovani, who was responsible for the military aspect of the coup, is now comfortably living in Moscow.) Finally, Gamsakhurdia died under mysterious circumstances. This happened at about the same time as Dudaev's assassination.

After the chaotic period in Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and a Politburo member, came to power. Actually, he was also indebted to Moscow, since it helped overthrow the first president. His indebtedness together with his past must have served as a convincing argument for Shevardnadze's pro-Russian orientation. Russia believed that it had brought her man to Georgia, but it soon noticed that he was also getting out of control. Soon after Shevardnadze's arrival in Georgia, he, as a member of the State Council, paid, one after another, official visits to China, Turkey, Iran and Germany. That time, all of these countries had tense relations with Russia. This political trip made it clear that the new leader of Georgia was going to counterbalance Russia's influence on his country. Following these visits certain events in Abkhazia immediately took place: In West Georgia Gamsakhurdia's former supporters robbed trains with the cargo meant for Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Georgian authorities had to ensure the railway's security. Among other things, this implied sending military subdivisions to Abkhazia. Kitovani, who was responsible for this military operation did everything to provoke conflict. Shevardnadze was not able or did not want to realize that he was caught in a trap. Later he was there, in Sukhumi, standing under the rain of shells, but it did not help. Georgians lost the war.

After returning to Tbilisi, Shevardnadze invited journalists from all the international agencies to accuse Russia, for the first (and the last) time, of what had happened in Abkhazia. Immediately after that, Gamsakhurdia's armed supporters started to move in the direction of Tbilisi, which had no strength left to defend itself. Russia offered Shevardnadze help with Zviad Gamsakhurdia's supporters. In return, Georgia had to 1) join the CIS, and 2) appoint the candidates, recommended by Moscow, to all the responsible posts (both seemed to be equally important to Moscow). Shevardnadze agreed. After that Zviad's supporters disappeared. Moscow achieved its aim: Georgia's political elite became clearly pro-Russian.

The ministers appointed by Moscow were faithful servants. They reported first to their bosses in Moscow, and then to Tbilisi. They closely controlled their Tbilisi boss, but the 'white fox' managed to negotiate with the Azeri and Turk leaders first, and then with the American leaders, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project. The project was officially announced only after its signature in 1995. This was immediately followed by the first attack on Shevardnadze. Igor Giorgadze, Shevardnadze's Minister of Defense and one of the organizers of the terrorist act, left Georgia from the airport of Russia's military base after this unsuccessful exercise. In the following period, Shevardnadze slowly replaced all the pro-Russian ministers. Russia lost its influence on the Georgian political elite, again. As a result, another attack was organized on Shevardnadze's life. This time it was implemented by Zviad Gamsakhurdia's supporters, who had been preparing for the terrorist act in Russia. Shevardnadze was lucky to survive, again.

Now let us stop for a moment and try to make conclusions based on the biographies of these two presidents. Their biographies show that Moscow always attempted to have controllable people in the Georgian political elite. But if a person got out of control, Moscow tried to force him or her out of the political life, which could take any form, including physical liquidation. It was very tough in personnel related matters.

At the beginning of the new century, a new opposition formed in Georgia. It had been brought up in Shevardnadze's immediate environment. The opposition's criticism was aimed at the weaknesses of its former protector's governance style (corruption, mismanagement, wrong selection of personnel, weakness of will, etc.). The leaders of the new opposition were Zhvania, Saakashvili and Burjanadze. Both people and western partners trusted them. They were fed up with corruption and Shevardnadze's 'blackmailing' policy directed at Russia and the West to fix his own mistakes, i.e. restore the country's territorial integrity. Neither Russia nor the West was going to solve this problem and the capricious President interfered with both of them. The West started to support the replacement of power in Georgia. This was done both financially and organizationally (Russia might have also made its contribution). Then happened what was supposed to happen, i.e. the Rose Revolution. Shevardnadze resigned, which means that the West reached its aim . . . and so did Russia.

Having said the above, it is still very surprising why Russia, who had always tried to support the elite suitable for its own purposes, was silent during the Rose Revolution. She openly reacted only in relation to Aslan Abashidze. Abashidze never concealed his links with Moscow ( by the way, he lives there at present). Moscow used him as one of the levers to exert pressure on the Georgian President. Saakashvili, who came to power, decided to make Abashidze resign through Tbilisi style revolution. Moscow got involved in the process to help Saakashvili. It convinced Abashidze to leave his post and saved Georgia from serious clashes. Why did not Russia behave in a similar way in August 2008? Why did she provide such an unprecedented assistance to the new President of Georgia? Why did Moscow refuse to use its usual means of pressure? Does it mean they were no longer useful? The assistance like this points to the fact that Russia trusted the 'rose' revolutionary. But where did this trust come from? How come that Moscow, who had never 'believed in tears', started to feel like this?

There is no satisfactory answer to these questions. Saakashvili's uncle, a Russian citizen, who was a high ranking official in Russia's special services for quite a long time ( in the last years he worked in Russia's representation to the UN ) might have been one of the trust factors. He was actively involved in the formation of the new government and even took part in the Georgian Security Council's meetings. There are some more factors to consider. For example, soon after setting up his cabinet, Prime Minister Zhvania offered the post of the Minister of Economy to Russian citizen Kakha Bendukidze. Bendukidze was involved in big business in Russia and made money from state orders (The privatization process, as a result of which most valuable privatization objects turned out to be in Russia's hands, is linked to his name). May be trust was formed because of the young politician's activity which was directed against Shevardnadze. Russia might have indirectly (and to a certain extent) assisted them for this particular reason. This possibility should not be ruled out. (They say that when the Rose Revolution reached its peak Igor Giorgadze's people were also among the revolutionary). There is another possibility too: The young revolutionary felt indebted to Moscow authorities (at least for their help in Adjara) and took into consideration their interests (when appointing the Minister of Economy, for examples). We all know all the above listed facts, but there might have been some other factors of trust we are not aware of.

All the Georgian presidents were more or less compliant in their relationship with Russia, but, at a certain stage, they always got out of its control. Saakashvili might have also got out of its control at a certain point and burst into Tskhinvali without Moscow's consent, which entailed the corresponding punitive actions. Another possibility is that conflict with Georgia somewhat suited Russia, since it wanted to demonstrate to its western friends how helpless they were in front of it. The image of strong country is necessary for Russia to solve with the West other controversial issues. Therefore, we could state that Russia deliberately tried to provoke the conflict through military

and political means and Georgia unintentionally became its partner in 2008. When Russia needs the peacemaker's image (it seems we won't have to wait long for this to happen, as the aggressive image has already entailed negative consequences for Russia), it will change its policy and Georgia will support these changes . . . or the Georgian political elite will change.

As for Georgia's policy, being a small country, Georgia always considers the position of big states. (King Erekle wore an oriental turban and a European uniform.) This also applies to Russia. Bridges won't be burnt even in the case of tough rhetoric. The above said explains the difference between Georgia's economic and political strategies and the existence of contacts that are not visible on the surface. If we use rational approach, we are bound to arrive at exactly this kind of conclusion.

*Emil Pain*

## **The Political and Psychological Aspects of the Georgian-Russian Conflict**

Almost two years after the Georgian-Russian armed conflict and Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the fact that I did not comment spontaneously on the events in August-September, 2008, makes me really feel happy. When reading others' comments of that period I clearly see that all the analysts got caught in the trap of false dichotomy: 'If one side is not right, the other is...' By the way, it was already noted by Stalin that 'sometimes both are worse'. Also in this case, both Russia and Georgia demonstrated different forms of the same disease – *a severe form of intoxication with political illusions*. In Russia, it was manifested in the form of manic ambition to play the role of the regional superpower, one of the centers of the multi-polar world. In Georgia it was manifested in relation to ethnic and territorial communities, as a mania of violent coercion to coexist in the same state. My present comment is an attempt to describe the *anamnesis of this mass disease*. In my opinion, most experts have overlooked some of its political and psychological characteristics.

### **Georgia was preparing for war**

As for the Georgian authorities, the level of its intoxication with political illusions by the moment of the demonstration of force had been very high. You can perceive the Georgian army able to compete with Russian forces and even beat them only

when being in such a state. In this context, I would like to present several statements of Georgian leaders.

Mikheil Saakashvili. President of Georgia:

*‘Georgia has never been as strong as it is today. It has not had such an opportunity to defend the State’s integrity so far. It has not had such a well - disciplined and trained army so far. Today we are able to fight with any opponent.’<sup>1</sup>*

Givi Targamadze, Chairman of the Committee on Defense and Security of Parliament of Georgia :

*‘Even the Russian army does not have such well-disciplined and organized subdivision. The Georgian army is much better than the Russian army...’<sup>2</sup>*

Irakli Okruashvili, the former Minister of Defense of Georgia:

*‘...Russia is doomed to be defeated in the case of war with Georgia. ...We are ready to fight even to-morrow. The negotiation process between Russia and Georgia has totally exhausted itself’.<sup>3</sup>* I will go back to this statement, made in 2004, later.

It is quite possible that at the beginning these statements were only made to raise the morale of Georgian society, but after being reiterated, political technologists might have started to believe in these words. People are prone to take desirable for reality and, sometimes, an innocent psychological aberrancy might transform into an obsessive delusion. I think that something similar happened to the Georgian authorities as a result of breathtaking success. First of all, I mean regaining control over the Adjarian Autonomous Republic. This happened in 2004 as a result of a rapid political operation carried out shortly after M. Saakashvili was elected President of Georgia.

Adjarian ‘anschluss’, considered an unmanageable task in Shevardnadze’s period, became the President’s remarkable achievement. This victory turned out to be rather important for Georgian public, which was ready to forgive its authorities a lot for the sake of the symbols of territorial grandeur. It is quite likely that just this victory created an illusion of repeated success, although the Adjarian experience of 2004 was of no use in the South Ossetia of 2008. Regaining Adjara turned out to be rapid and bloodless, since Tbilisi relied on the local Orthodox population, constituting the absolute majority of Adjarian population, whereas the Adjarians - an ethnic group of Muslim Georgians, for whom this autonomy was then created, are a minority constituting less than 30% of population.

Tbilisi attempted to rely on ethnic Georgian population, the residents of Georgian

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1 Яшлавский А. Язык до Цхинвала довел// Московский комсомолец 11 сентября 2008 г. С.2 Доступно в Интернете <http://www.mk.ru/blogs/МК/2008/09/11/abroad/370296/>

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid

villages, also in South Ossetia, but Georgians have never been the majority there. According to the census of 1926, they constituted only 26% of the Autonomy's population even in the best years, and by August 2008, their share had been less than one fourth of the total population. After the Dagomis agreement in 1992, this territory actually existed independently from Georgia for 17 years. Over ¾ of its population (mainly Ossetian population constituting 60% of its residents) manifested an extremely hostile attitude towards Georgia. In the situation like this, the voluntary return of South Ossetia under Georgia's jurisdiction was theoretically inconceivable; also, Russia's influence ruled out this possibility in practice. Already in the mid-1990s, South Ossetia and Abkhazia actually became parts of Russia. Their leaders were invited to the Federation's subjects' meetings in the South Federal okrug along with the governors and heads of the Russian republics.

The Georgian government was facing the following choice: It could either try to focus Georgian society on the problems that were much more important than the return of lost territories, or keep feeding mass illusions regarding the Great Georgia's reintegration while preparing itself for war. But why reintegration through military means? Because the Georgian idea of *reconquista* is exclusive for the post-Soviet space, because it is the **only idea that inevitably leads to the necessity of war with Russia**. You cannot find such a strong necessity anywhere else. For example, its existence is totally excluded in the situation of Nagorno-Karabakh, and is not likely to occur in Transnistria.

Unfortunately, the second option turned out to be almost inevitable given the permanence of Georgian revolution. Every new leader came to power on the shoulders of the revolting people with the promise to fix the mistakes of his predecessors and regain the lost autonomies.

After the Adjarian *blitzkrieg*, the Georgian government made its choice and started preparations for a planned, forcible return of the two other autonomies. It is enough to look at the speedy growth of the military budget and the chronicle of events. May 2004 – overthrowing Abashidze in Adjara; July 20, 2004 – Saakashvili announces his readiness to leave the Dagomis agreement regulating the status-quo of South Ossetia 'if it is impossible to raise the Georgian flag over Tskhinvali'; August 19, 2004 – attack on the village of Tliakan in South Ossetia (one of the strategic heights over Tskhinvali) where Irakli Okruashvili foretold an inevitable victory over Russia while giving to Georgian soldiers the medals for this operation in front of TV cameras. I can also give some more examples illustrating Georgia's lengthy preparations for the Tskhinvali campaign. This was not a mere response to the provocations made by the South Ossetian side immediately before the campaign.

Russia's actions in this conflict cannot be interpreted as a reaction, either. Long before the official recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia,

Russia made these territories into its own provinces through different means: It distributed to their residents Russian passports, abolished the visa regime applied to Georgia, created special conditions for the provision of energy resources and social protection, formed local military subdivisions and supplied them with weapons, and, what is most important, used increasingly aggressive rhetoric in relation to Georgia especially after it declared its intention to join NATO. At the same time, Russia's military actions in August 2008 do not give because for the questions that often appeared in the western press: 'Who will be Russia's next victim?' I'd like to emphasize once again that, in the post-Soviet space; there are no annals of Georgia-Russia confrontation related to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. There are also some other factors that put limitations on Russian expansionism, which I will discuss later.

So, what was Russia preparing for?

### **Russia asserts itself**

Having looked through more than two dozen enthusiastic comments from those fascinated by Russia's victory over Georgia, I could not find, to my surprise, even a single (!) comment which would refer to '**saving peaceful population from aggression and genocide**' as one of the attributes of success. However, it was officially stated to be the reason for sending the Russian army to South Ossetia. Later, I understood the following: Even those analysts who support the government do not want to look like simpletons. They understand quite well that the protection of human rights, peaceful citizens or minorities is not an important value in our society. Who will believe in Russian legends about the 'protection of minorities' after the two Chechen wars and in the situation of almost universal phobia towards Caucasian people, contemptuously called 'southerners', 'blacks' or 'wooden-headed'. The statistically average Russian will hardly tell 'his' Caucasian from 'outsiders', be it an Abkhaz or a Georgian or Ossetian, Chechen or Ingush.

Analysts are always eager to show their professionalism, ability to see the real motives and uncover the drives of political actions. So, what the authorities had on their minds, their servant experts had on their tongues. Anyway, most experts singled out three key motives of the conflict, which are given below.

#### *1. Geopolitical gains*

Vadim Tsimbursky speaks about gaining a new shelf by Russia: '*And yet it is a success... It is very good that we control South Ossetia that hangs over Tbilisi and represents the route that splits Georgia. It is good that we control Sukhumi with its splendid bay and access to Poti*'.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Цимбурский. В. Сила или удача? Новый шельф России// Русский журнал. Еженедельное издание Русского института. Вып. 2. 15 сентября 2008 г., с. 9

Vladimir Zhirinovskiy: *'Now we can conclude an agreement and place an army in each (i.e. Abkhazia and South Ossetia). We can restore the Transcaucasian military district again.'*<sup>5</sup>

Kira Lukyanova, Member of Parliament (State Duma), and Russian Federation, the faction 'Just Russia': *'Firstly, we are establishing control over the Caucasian region. Secondly, we have fully and totally foiled the plans of the US and Great Britain – to fully encircle Russia with the help of NATO in the Caucasus.'*<sup>6</sup>

No feelings of joy or sorrow concerning 'peaceful population'. All is presented in a prosaic and matter-of-fact tone, in terms of heights, garrisons and strategic gains. The tone of the description of military achievements is just the same.

## *2. Consolidation of society through enemy image*

Sergey Melkov, co-chairman of the Association of Military Politologists, conducted the analysis of the strategic goals of the 'five-day war'. This kind of analysis is very typical of modern Russian experts. Sergey Melkov says: 'It seems that it is an attempt to establish one's independent position within the international community, as well as the demonstration of the readiness to practically solve conflicts in the near abroad for one's own benefit. It is also the unity of the society and the elite around the president.'<sup>7</sup> It has to be mentioned, that in this context, unity can only refer to 'negative unity', which has been analyzed quite well by Lev Gudkov.<sup>8</sup> Gudkov presents both theoretical and empirical analysis of this phenomenon. What we are talking about is the unification of Russia's population by enemy image.

We all know who became Russia's main enemy in the so-called zero years. I have never witnessed such an outrageous anti-American and anti-Western propaganda on the state radio and TV channels. I learned from the literary program what our artists and writers were talking about in that period: 'I cannot forgive your works for spoiling our population by following Allen Dulles' instructions'- said a popular artist to a well-known writer. The writer who sensed the opening of the 'witch-hunting season' got really frightened and said: 'Oh, no! I am not an American spy. I don't like those Americans myself.' You can feel the signs of mass psychosis and persecution mania

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5 Жириновский В. Комментарии.// Россия признала независимость Абхазии и Южной Осетии Комментарии. 26 августа, 2008. <http://kommentarii.ru/theme/1006>

6 Лукьянова К. (депутат ГД РФ, фракция «Справедливая Россия») Комментарии.// Россия признала независимость Абхазии и Южной Осетии Комментарии. 26 августа, 2008. <http://kommentarii.ru/theme/1006>

7 Мальков С. (Сопредседатель Ассоциации военных политологов, доктор политических наук) Комментарии.// Россия признала независимость Абхазии и Южной Осетии Комментарии. 26 августа, 2008 <http://kommentarii.ru/theme/1006>

8 Гудков. Л. Негативная идентичность. Статьи 1997-2002 . М.: Новое литературное обозрение. 2004.

in modern Russia. In the atmosphere like this, the opposition between Russia and the West is pictured via irrational images of mystically predetermined clash between civilizations. ‘A large-scale confrontation with the West controlled from the same center; i.e. US, was inevitable. Saakashvili’s military adventure is just a pretext that made Russia and the West get into a severe fight in the direction of which they were steadily moving throughout the last years ... And even though this sounds quite strange, it is just necessary for Russia to go through a large-scale confrontation with the West to find the place it deserves in this complex world.’<sup>9</sup> These words belong to a writer, rather than a young boy. This is how incoherent, nowadays, our men of letters are. However, they do not sense the main reason why Georgia was attacked.

### 3. Russia’s self-assertion in confrontation with the West.

As it has turned out, Russia was fighting with the entire West, rather than the windmill or the Georgian army that was ten times as weak and small as Russian forces. Therefore, Russia has won a totally different victory, much sweeter and far more important.

Here are the headings of newspaper comments: ‘Revival of power’; ‘Russia has stopped to retreat’; ‘Russia has risen from its knees’. The theme of the second issue of the *Russian Magazine* (Gleb Pavlovsky’s project) is the ‘strength regained by Russia after the five-day war in the Caucasus’.<sup>10</sup> Here are the excerpts from the comments in the press:

*Moscow demonstrated to the West the political will and resources necessary to take principal decisions in foreign policy.*<sup>11</sup>

*We live in a new Russia, where the country’s status in the international arena is valued much higher than the mercantile motives of some of the representatives of our elite. It is a big honor to live in such a country.*<sup>12</sup>

*Medvedev and Putin have accomplished the average Russian’s dream – to be scaring and to be respected; just as in the Soviet times.*<sup>13</sup>

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9 Копустин . О. ( писатель, историк) Комментарий.// Россия признала независимость Абхазии и Южной Осетии Комментарий. 26 августа, 2008. <http://kommentarii.ru/theme/1006>

10 Русский журнал. Еженедельное издание Русского института. Вып. 2. 15 сентября 2008 г

11 Войко. Е. В. (эксперт по внешней политике Центра политической конъюнктуры России) Комментарий.// Россия признала независимость Абхазии и Южной Осетии Комментарий. 26 августа, 2008. <http://kommentarii.ru/theme/1006>

12 Россия признала независимость Абхазии и Южной Осетии. Комментарий. 26 августа, 2008. <http://kommentarii.ru/theme/1006>

13 Ibid

All these ambitions are sincere. I believe in that. Another thing is that setting such objectives points to the irrelevance of the evaluations made by politicians and analysts implied by the thinking poisoned with myths and illusions.

## **The imperial myths of the Russian elite**

Let us think about whether Russia's political gains in Georgia, all those 'comfortable bays' and 'strategic heights' are really important in the light of its true interests. I'd like to remind the reader that a gain is something that has never existed before. But the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were available for Russia before August 2008, weren't they? Both new 'independent' states have been fully controlled by Russia for about 20 years now. The majority of their citizens (80%) had Russian citizenship before that. Artillery and aviation were brought into these regions also in the past. All these years the Russian fleet did not let the Georgian fleet into Sukhumi Bay. Therefore, from the perspective of gaining 'heights' and 'bays', 12.5 billion of military expenses and much higher expenses on the assimilation of the two new 'independent' subjects of the imperial shelf are really huge.

Did Russia gain more control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia by recognizing their independence? Of course not. Both republics were more dependent on Russia in their previous status of 'unrecognized' states. Even if nothing changes in tiny South Ossetia, 'independent' Abkhazia might really become independent and demonstrate to Russia the peculiarities of its interests, which has been done many times by our numerous independent 'brothers' on Balkans. After all, even our sister Belarus sometimes becomes obstinate.

It is quite logical to question the fact that Russia did manage to demonstrate its status of 'superpower', 'a new pole of influence opposing the US'. The consequences of the five-day conflict, and, first of all, the process of non-recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence, have emphasized, like never before, the **total geopolitical loneliness of Russia**. Who lives on our pole? A croaky – froggy and a little mouse - norushka. Russia with Nicaragua. Russian leaders' hopes for China's and SCO's support have failed. The recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence has not been supported by the members of the privileged club of CIS, participants of the Collective Security Treaty. Even the legitimate second half of the Union State, Belarus, is taking time to recognize the new independent states. Can Russia be called a pole of international influence after that? It is not a pole at all. It is just an island, which is not an island of stability, by the way.

After the five-day war they talked a lot about a particular Russian stability and its lowered sensitivity to the global financial crisis. Boastful statements like "we don't care for the West' and its possible sanctions against Russia's invasion of Georgia'

have the same ground. *‘Sovereign Russia is not afraid of the threats from the West . . . They are going to block our accession to the WTO? Many thanks for that. Or lower stock indices? That’s OK. May they be blessed for that? Speculative capital might damage the economy of other countries, but not the economy of Russia. The West can’t live without oil and gas.’* – says Andrey Savelyev, former deputy, currently the leader of the party ‘Great Russia’. But oil prices have collapsed. It could not happen otherwise, because they were one of the soap bubbles at the basis of the global economic crisis. The consequences of this crisis turned out to be even graver for Russia than for America. To support the Russian financial sector the government plans to allocate from the budget huge resources, equal to the 10% of GDP. The crisis clearly showed the interdependence of world powers. In the situation like this it becomes necessary to introduce some other images instead of the ‘poles’ and ‘islands’. It is more relevant to speak about one boat, in which most countries of the world have found themselves. So, we’d better not rock this boat so carelessly.

However, the means that will curb Russia’s imperial ambitions and help it get rid of its feverish illusions should not be searched for in the external factors, but within our federation, or our empire, to be more exact.

The federation and the empire are quite similar in terms of the arrangement of poly-ethnic states. Moreover, the biggest number of the so-called asymmetric ethnic federations was built on the ruins of the former empires, exactly at their place. However, it sometimes happens that federations still tend to become an empire. I think that this tendency is typical of Russia.<sup>14</sup> So, in what way do these state arrangements differ? Here I would like to quote M. Filippov’s felicitous response: ‘On the whole, the arrangement of the empire can be compared with the planned directive economy (regional administration is appointed from the center or from ‘above’), whereas the arrangement of the federation - with market economy (leaders are elected in the course of competition or from ‘below’).<sup>15</sup> Already in the middle of the past century they determined the reasons for the transition from the empire to the federation, which was caused by the exhaustion of imperial resources. Already at the end of the XIX century, empires were not able to retain ethnic territories by force. It became also more difficult for the central authorities to control diverse ethnic territories with the help of appointed governors who demanded increased payment for their loyalty and provided less guarantees for their submission to the supreme power. The five-day armed conflict showed that this resource had been exhausted and made the problem even more acute.

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14 The author expressed and justified this idea in a number of his works.

15 Филиппов М. Введение в книгу «Унитарная федерация»// Захаров А. Унитарная федерация ять этюдов о российском федерализме. М.: Московская школа политических исследований. 2008. С. 7-8

Why was the hero of the breakthrough of the Georgian forces under Tskhinvali, *Vostok* battalion commander colonel Sulim Yamadayev fired from the army instead of being rewarded? Because the federal authorities more depend on the present ruler of Chechnya Ramzan Kadirov, than on the Kremlin. The federal authorities have to neglect that all the potential competitors of the present Chechen ruler, or the politicians and state servants having their independent opinion, are forced out of the country or are just annihilated. This also applies to the people who are hundred percent loyal to the federal power, like deputy of the State Duma, hero of Russia Ruslan Yamadayev who was killed in the center of Moscow or colonel Movladi Baisarov, commander of the group *Gorets*, who was killed at the same place one year before. Nowadays, Ramzan Kadirov cannot have any legal competitors. At the same time, the empire is not able to control its provinces, if the supreme power has no leverages to influence its governor, if he cannot be dismissed or replaced by someone else. This is where Russia should strive for multi-polarity, or, at, least try to introduce diversification into the loyal political figures. However, this is not the case in Chechnya. Here they have only one pole of influence. Chechnya of the Ramzan Kadirov period is actually more independent from Russia than in the Dudaev or Maskhadov period. In the regions other republics also formed a social space where Russia's legal norms do not actually work. No less than 90 armed clashes are registered in Dagestan per year. They take place between illegal formations and federal forces or representatives of local law-enforcement bodies. Dagestan is far ahead Chechnya in this respect.

### **On the depletion of the resources of imperialistic policy**

Not long ago our Prime Minister V. Putin rightly noted that Russia did not need any new territories; if it could only retain its own territories. . . You can't say it better! Relationship between the retention of the existing territories and Russia's ambition in the post-Soviet space is not limited to the fact that both objectives are ensured by the same state pocket, at the expense of the same resources. There are also some other relationships between the named objectives. For example, the internal Ossetian - Ingush conflict has not been at all solved and you don't have to be an excellent expert on ethnic conflicts to understand that if the authorities give more attention to the Ossetian side, they will get increased mistrust from the Ingush side.

You can observe some developments also in other regions that complicate the preservation of the integrity of the Russian empire's body. These are, first of all, the changes that take place within the ethnic elites. Some of the active participants of national movements got involved in business, others - in government structures, some of them were annihilated in the North Caucasus, others just got old, passed away, lost the population's trust or lost the status of national leader. Who were they replaced by? This question is both important and difficult to answer. In the 90s, national leaders

appeared on the screen all the time; everyone knew them and they did want to be known. What we observe today is that their activity has acquired a new form. You will never know many leaders, because they do not want this to happen.

Slogans have also changed. In the 90s, national movements used national-democratic slogans and were oriented towards the West, which considered being their supporter. Today, most national movements in Russia, especially those in the areas historically related with the Islam, mainly use anti-western, fundamentalist slogans. These forces count on ideological, organizational and financial resources of the new subject of global policy – international Islamic movements.

Changes in the unification basis are also visible. In the 90s, the ideas of ethnic separatism played the unifying function, whereas today, in many regions, the ethnic factor is being replaced with the religious factor. In the North Caucasus, the idea of ethnic separatism has been replaced with another idea – replacement of the secular state with the clerical state. ‘First, we will form imamate and then we will see where its borders are’. This idea was put forward by the last public leader of Chechen boeviks Abdul Khalim Saidullaev, who replaced Aslan Maskhadov and was murdered in the same manner.

So, what can we expect from ethno-political changes? They manifest themselves differently in different regions. The leaders of the nationalist and radical-fundamentalist movements in the Povolzhie republics are still warming up in the foreign fields. It is not accidental that there were no Chechens among the Talibs seized by Americans in Afghanistan (they can manifest their activity in home places), but there were Tatar and Bashkir extremists, who are only getting ready for their housework.

The situation in the North Caucasus is totally different. Instead of the single Chechen battlefield (as it was the case in the 1990s), now we have at least three battlefronts – Chechen, Ingush and Dagestan.

The Patriarch of All Georgia rightfully said: ‘Separation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region from Georgia is dangerous for Russia itself. This will trigger separatism in your country, and you will have many more problems in Russia, than we have today in Georgia.’<sup>16</sup> These words are quite close to the truth.

The only thing the Russian authorities can put on their list of achievements related to the given conflict is the mass enthusiasm of the population supporting the Russian military’s action in South Ossetia. The symbolic resources of Russian society’s temporary unity around the authorities have been preserved so far and may even increase due to the enemy image and the world leader’s ambitions. However, the agitation caused by victory over Georgia did not last longer than the mass excitement after the

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16 Грузинский Патриарх призывает Россию одуматься  
[http://www.ndance.ru/developments/id\\_90294/](http://www.ndance.ru/developments/id_90294/)

Russian footballers' victory over Holland's team at Euro -2008. The empire's main vice, described by historian Vasily Klyuchevsky as 'The state swells – the people become feeble.' Everyday problems have been constantly reminding us of the Russian society's vulnerability to the arbitrary and illegitimate actions of the authorities who can just pull the economic knife-switch at their own will and lower the market through billions of rubles, devastate a successful corporation, and, finally, pull thousands of people into the armed conflict having even a weaker moral justification than the 'protection of the peaceful population of Tskhinvali.'

*Vladimer Papava*

## **Post-Soviet Economic Relations between Georgia and Russia: Reality and Development Potential**

Georgia-Russia economic relations became controversial already after the disintegration of the USSR. They are even more difficult at present.

After the five-day Georgia-Russia war in August 2008<sup>1</sup> and the recognition, by Moscow, of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence, Georgia-Russia relations deteriorated a lot: Diplomatic relations have been terminated and top officials in both states refrain from holding a dialogue. This has, of course, influenced Georgia – Russia economic relations.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the nature of the main problems in the economic relations of these two countries and define, wherever possible, the ways of their improvement.

### **History in Brief**

In the former USSR, economic relations between Russia and Georgia were built as a constituent part of the Soviet State, i.e. within the framework of integrated national economy. From the perspective of the Soviet Union's administrative division, Georgia,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*", in Svante E. Cornell, and S. Frederick Starr, eds. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2009.

like many other relatively small Soviet republics, was perceived as a part of the Transcaucasian economic region, rather than an independent entity.<sup>2</sup> After the collapse of the USSR and the centralized economy, followed by breaking up of established production relationships between individual economic subjects, the enterprises in the post-Soviet space had to find a market to sell one's own products. This turned out to be quite a difficult task given international competition, low quality of products and/or high production costs.<sup>3</sup>

One of the first mistakes made by the Georgian authorities at the beginning of the 90s, was imposing economic blockade against Russia. Georgians blocked the Samtredia railway junction, as a result of which the existing production relationships between Georgia and Russia (and not only Russia) broke up earlier than in other post-Soviet republics.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the first economic losses in Georgia-Russia relations were caused by the Georgian government.

The Commonwealth of Independent States was formed immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. All the former Soviet republics joined the CIS except for the Baltic states.<sup>5</sup> According to a number of experts, the CIS has been experiencing certain difficulties with integration almost since the moment of its existence.<sup>6</sup> One

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- 2 *Закавказский экономический район. Экономико-географический очерк.* под ред. А.А. Адамеску, и Е.Д. Силаева. Москва, «Наука», 1973.
  - 3 Vladimir Papava. "Necroeconomics – the Theory of Post-Communist Transformation of an Economy." *International Journal of Social Economics*, 2002, Vol. 29, No. 9/10: Vladimir Papava. *Necroeconomics: The Political Economy of Post-Communist Capitalism*. New York, iUniverse, 2005.
  - 4 В. Папава, и Т. Беридзе. "Проблемы реформирования грузинской экономики". *Российский экономический журнал*, 1994, № 3.
  - 5 Georgia joined the CIS later, at the end of 1993. This happened after the Georgian military forces, fighting for territorial integrity, had to leave Abkhazia, which resulted in a wave of thousands of internally displaced people. Hoping to regulate relationship with Russia, the government of Georgia took a decision to join the CIS to make Moscow benevolent. It has to be noted that Russia supported, from the very beginning, separatist movements not only in Georgia, but also in the other former Soviet republics. (See, *Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in The Caucasus and Central Asia*, Gary K. Bertsch, Cassidy Craft, Scott A. Jones, and Michael Beck, eds. New York: Routledge, 2000; Dov Lynch. *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States. Unresolved Conflicts and De Facto States*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004).
  - 6 Р.С. Гринберг, Л.З. Зевин, и др. *10 лет Содружества независимых государств: иллюзии, разочарования, надежды.* Москва: ИМЭПИ РАН, 2001; Л.П. Козик, и П.А. Кохно. *СНГ: реалии и перспективы.* Москва: Издательский дом «Юридический мир ВК», 2001; В.А. Шульга (рук. авт. колл.). *Экономика СНГ: 10 лет реформирования и интеграционного развития.* Москва: Финстатинформ, 2001; Н.Н. Шумский. *Сотрудничество независимых государств: проблемы и перспективы развития.* Минск: «Технопринт», 2001; Николай Шумский. "Экономическая интеграция

of the main reasons is putting limitations on the integration processes by keeping it within CIS limits and making it similar to the industrial cooperation characteristic of the closed Soviet economic system.<sup>7</sup> Russia's military aggression against Georgia<sup>8</sup> and unilateral recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence by Moscow questions the advisability of the existence of this organization, which only formally declares the inviolability of its member states' borders.<sup>9</sup> After the Russian aggression Georgia left the CIS<sup>10</sup>, which, in addition to other problems, made the organization's future even more questionable.<sup>11</sup>

Already before the Georgia-Russia war in August 2008 that is in the year 2006 Russia punished Georgia for its western orientation by closing the Russian market for Georgian wines,<sup>12</sup> mineral waters<sup>13</sup> and agricultural products, in general. This was explained by low quality of Georgian products. However, high quality products were

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государств Содружества: возможности и перспективы". *Вопросы экономики*, 2003, № 6; Николай Шумский. "Общее экономическое пространство государств содружества: оптимальный формат". *Мировая экономика и международные отношения*, 2004, № 2.

- 7 Bruno Coppieters. "The Failure of Regionalism in Eurasia and the Western Ascendancy over Russia's Near Abroad". in Bruno Coppieters, Alexei Zverev, and Dmitri Trenin, eds., *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*. London: FRANK CASS PUBLISHERS, 1998, pp. 194-197; Martha Brill Olcott, Anders Åslund, and Sherman W. Garnett. *Getting it Wrong: Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999.
- 8 Павел Фельгенгауэр. "Это была не спонтанная, а спланированная война". *Новая газета*, 2008, 13 августа, на сайте <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2008/59/04.html>.
- 9 Roy Allison. "Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce Georgia to Peace'". *International Affairs*, 2008, Vol. 84, No. 6, p. 1161.
- 10 "Грузия выходит из СНГ – заявил Саакашвили". *Civil.Ge*, 2008, 12 августа, на сайте <http://www.civil.ge/rus/article.php?id=17276&search=СНГ>; "Парламент Грузии поддержал выход страны из СНГ". *Civil.Ge*, 2008, 14 августа, на сайте <http://www.civil.ge/rus/article.php?id=17327&search=СНГ>.
- 11 Джоанна Лиллис. "Кыргызстан: Отсутствие результатов вновь ставит под сомнение будущее СНГ". *Eurasianet – На русском языке*, 2008, 14 Октября, на сайте <http://russian.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101408ru.shtml>; Stephen Blank. "Russia Pressures CIS Members to Approve its Policies". *CACI Analyst*, 2008, October 01, available at <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4949>.
- 12 Zaal Anjaparidze. "Russia Continues to Press Georgian Wine Industry". *Eurasia Daily Monitor, The Jamestown Foundation*, 2006, April 20, available at [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=31602](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=31602); Mamuka Tsereteli. "Banned in Russia: The Politics of Georgian Wine". *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*, 2006, April 19, available at <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3904>.
- 13 Robert Parsons. "Russia/Georgia: Russia Impounds Georgian Mineral Water". *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, 2006, April 19, available at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/04/e3ee1b53-6b14-4553-a05d-4aa389364dd0.html>.

not allowed to enter the Russian market, either. This served as a serious stimulus to start searching for other new markets.<sup>14</sup> Although Moscow made a purely political decision to use economic measures to punish Georgia, this does not justify the insulting comments made by some of the high ranking Georgian officials.<sup>15</sup> By doing so they insulted their own people, in the first place.

At present, an opinion prevails that just like official diplomatic relations; economic relations have been also cut between the two countries. This is not true, since Georgia ‘exports’ its labor force to Russia and Russia is one of the biggest ‘importers’ of investments into Georgia.

Despite quite limited external trade transactions, trading relations have not been cut between the two countries. According to the official statistics, the share of Georgian exports into Russia within the total volume of Georgian exports dropped from 17,8% in 2005 (i.e. one year before Russia banned imports of food products from Georgia) to 2,0% in 2008,<sup>16</sup> and constituted 2.5% for ten months in 2009.<sup>17</sup> The same trend is observed in the reduction of the share of Russian imports into Georgia: In 2005, import from Russia into Georgia made up 15.4%, in 2008; this showing decreased to 6.7%,<sup>18</sup> and constituted 6,4% for ten months in 2009.<sup>19</sup>

Many citizens of Georgia as well as ethnic Georgians, who have managed to receive Russian citizenship and are now residing in Russia,<sup>20</sup> send some part of their

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- 14 Джон Македон. “Российское экономическое давление приводит Грузию к мысли о выходе из СНГ”. *Eurasianet – Русский*, 2006, 10 мая, на сайте <http://russian.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav051006ru.shtml>.
  - 15 “Ираклий Окруашвили: На российском рынке можно продать «фекальные массы»”. *Российское информационное агентство – URA.Ru*, 2006, 28 апреля, на сайте <http://ura.ru/content/world/28-04-2006/news/4491.html>; “Грузия без Саакашвили, но с Окруашвили”. *Газета.Ru*, 2007, 28 августа, на сайте [http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2007/08/28\\_kz\\_2100389.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2007/08/28_kz_2100389.shtml).
  - 16 “Georgian Exports by Countries, 1995-2008. External Economic relations”. *Department of Statistics Under Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia*, available at [http://www.statistics.ge/\\_files/english/bop/2008/Export\\_country.xls](http://www.statistics.ge/_files/english/bop/2008/Export_country.xls).
  - 17 “Georgian Exports by Countries, 2009. External Economic relations”. *Department of Statistics Under Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia*, available at [http://www.statistics.ge/\\_files/english/bop/2009/Export\\_country.xls](http://www.statistics.ge/_files/english/bop/2009/Export_country.xls).
  - 18 “Georgian Imports by Countries, 1995-2008. External Economic relations”. *Department of Statistics Under Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia*, available at [http://www.statistics.ge/\\_files/english/bop/2008/Import\\_country.xls](http://www.statistics.ge/_files/english/bop/2008/Import_country.xls).
  - 19 “Georgian Imports by Countries, 1995-2008. External Economic relations”. *Department of Statistics Under Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia*, available at [http://www.statistics.ge/\\_files/english/bop/2008/Import\\_country.xls](http://www.statistics.ge/_files/english/bop/2008/Import_country.xls).
  - 20 “Georgian Imports by Countries, 2009. External Economic relations”. *Department of*

earnings to the relatives living in Georgia. Introduction by Russia of visa regime with Georgia, the 2006 persecution of the ethnic Georgians (including Russia's citizens) living in Russia,<sup>21</sup> and a parallel development of the banking system, increased the use of bank channels for money remittances, which replaced the previously existing Soviet practice – delivering money to relatives via acquaintances returning to the home country.<sup>22</sup>

This practice was not influenced even by Georgia-Russia war of August 2008. In particular, a total of 403 mln USD was transferred to Georgia in 2005, i.e. one year before Russia's persecution of the Georgians. Out of this amount, over 240 mln USD was transferred from Russia, which made up 59,6% of the total of all the money remittances. Already in 2008, this figure increased 2.5 times as compared to the year 2005 and made up 1002 mln USD. Remittances from Russia increased 2,6 times and made up almost 634 mln USD or 63,3% of the total transfers.<sup>23</sup> Due to the global financial crisis, remittances to Georgia in the first ten months of 2009 constituted 84% of the remittances in the first ten months of 2008. Remittances from Russia were even smaller and constituted only 72.4%,<sup>24</sup> which can be mainly explained by the severity of the economic crisis in Russia.

As for Russia's investments into Georgian economy, the statistical information is so incomplete (not only on Russian investments, by the way) that it does not allow making conclusions about the actual situation. This is primarily caused by the fact that many companies working on direct investments are registered in offshore zones, due to which it is impossible to trace back the origin of their money. Despite this, the problem with Russian investments in the post-Soviet space (and not only there) is related to the concept of 'Liberal Empire' which has been implemented since 2002.

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*Statistics Under Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia*, available at [http://www.statistics.ge/\\_files/english/bop/2009/Import\\_country.xls](http://www.statistics.ge/_files/english/bop/2009/Import_country.xls).

- 21 For Russia labor migration is one of the most topical issues. (See С.В. Антуфьев. “Реалии трудовой иммиграции в современной России”. *Право и безопасность*, 2005, № 3 (16), Август, на сайте [http://dpr.ru/pravo/pravo\\_16\\_18.htm](http://dpr.ru/pravo/pravo_16_18.htm); Ж.А. Зайончковская. “Миграции между Россией и странами СНГ и Балтии: итоги последнего десятилетия”. *Аналитический вестник Совета Федерации ФС РФ*, 2003, № 10 (203), на сайте <http://www.budgetrf.ru/Publications/Magazines/VestnikSF/2003/vestniksf203-10/vestniksf203-10310.htm>).
- 22 Владимир Папава. “Нелиберальная «либеральная империя» России”. *Project Syndicate*, 2007, 28 февраля, на сайте <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/papava2/Russian>.
- 23 “Workers’ Remittances by Major Partner Countries”. *Money transfers by Countries, National Bank Of Georgia*, available at [http://www.nbg.gov.ge/uploads/moneytransfers/money\\_transfers\\_by\\_countrieseng.xls](http://www.nbg.gov.ge/uploads/moneytransfers/money_transfers_by_countrieseng.xls).
- 24 Ibid

## The Concept of 'Liberal Empire' and Georgia

Restoration of the empire even in a modernized form is always on Russian politicians' mind,<sup>25</sup> which has found its reflection in the concept of 'Liberal Empire.'<sup>26</sup> This concept implies that through economic expansion<sup>27</sup> Russia can restore its influence in the entire post-Soviet space.<sup>28</sup> It has to be noted that Chubais' concept of 'Liberal

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25 It has to be noted that the restoration of empire has always been a topical issue for Russia (even immediately after the dissolution of the USSR) (Karen Dawisha. "Imperialism, Dependence, and Interdependence in the Eurasian Space". In Adeed Dawisha, and Karen Dawisha, eds., *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and The New States of Eurasia*. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe, 1995). This was primarily manifested in the preservation of the institute of Soviet citizenship in former Soviet republics (Nodari A. Simonia. "Priorities of Russia's Foreign Policy and the Way It Works". In Adeed Dawisha, and Karen Dawisha, eds., *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and The New States of Eurasia*. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe, 1995, p. 22).

26 Анатолий Чубайс. "Миссия России в XXI веке". *Независимая газета*, 2003, 1 октября. [http://www.ng.ru/printed/ideas/2003-10-01/1\\_mission.html](http://www.ng.ru/printed/ideas/2003-10-01/1_mission.html).

It should be mentioned that the idea of 'Liberal Empire' did not originate from Russia (Юрий Крупнов. "Почему либеральная империя в России не получится?". *Вестник аналитики*, 2005, № 2 (20)). It was first put forward in the second half of the XIX century in Great Britain (H.C.G. Matthew. *The Liberal Imperialists. The Ideas and Politics of a Post-Gladstonian Élite*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) and was further elaborated at the end of the XX century (David Reiff. "A New Age of Liberal Imperialism?". *World Policy Journal*, 1999, Vol. XVI, No. 2). It is getting more and more Americanized (Theo Farrell. "Strategic Culture and American Empire". *The SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 2005, Vol. XXV, No. 2). It seems we have to agree with the opinion that the accelerated formulation of the Russian version of the 'Liberal Empire' was triggered by US military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Igor Torbakov. "Russian Policymakers Air Notion of "Liberal Empire" in Caucasus, Central Asia". *Eurasia Insight. Eurasianet*, 2003, October 27, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav102703.shtml>), as a possibility of the formation of the American 'democratic empire.' (Stanley Kurtz. "Democratic Imperialism". *Policy Review*, 2003, Issue 118, April/May). It has to be emphasized that different versions of the modern American empire are widely criticized at present (Alice H. Amsden. *Escape from Empire: The Developing World's Journey Through Heaven and Hell*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007).

27 According to its architects' plan, 'Liberal Empire' has to be formed through the ownership of the main economic objects (through the acquisition and development of assets) located on the territories of the former Soviet republics, rather than the occupation, by force, of these republics (Keith Crane, D. J. Peterson, and Olga Olikier. "Russian Investment in the Commonwealth of Independent States". *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2005, Vol. 46, No. 6).

28 Henry Kissinger. *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the Twenty-First Century*. London: The Free Press, 2002, p. 76.

Empire' was especially popular in 1998-2005.<sup>29</sup>

Russia started implementing its plan for the involvement of the Caucasus into the forming 'Liberal Empire' together with Armenia – its strategic partner in the region. The Russian-Armenian agreement 'Property in exchange for debt' was signed at the end of 2002.<sup>30</sup> Under this agreement Russia received from Armenia enterprises the value of which (93 mln USD) turned out to be enough to fully repay Armenia's debts to Russia. At present, Armenia's economy is fully absorbed by the Russian "Liberal Empire."<sup>31</sup>

Russia's liberal-imperial plans in the Caucasus could be well illustrated by the following fact: Armenians transferred to the Russian monopolist 'Russian railways' (100% state owned) the management rights for the Armenian railways. These rights have been transferred for 30 years and can be extended for another 20 years after the initial 20 year operation period. This has been implemented through setting up a 100% daughter company 'South Caucasus Railways.'<sup>32</sup> The name of the latter reveals Russia's intention to own not only Armenian, but also Azeri and Georgian railways.

Russia's second move to restore its empire in the Caucasus implies the integration of Armenia and Russia into single economic space. Since Georgia's geographic location impedes the accomplishment of this objective, Russia had to deal with Georgia in the first place. It should be emphasized that in case the 'Liberal Empire' plan is successfully implemented in Georgia, it will be easier to involve Azerbaijan, as all of its main transport and communication arteries (including the most important pipelines) run through Georgia.

The first attempt to involve Georgia into the 'Liberal Empire' was made in 2003, when Chubais' RAO EES bought stocks and other assets of the American company 'AES<sup>33</sup>- Silk Road' – the owner of Tbilisi electricity distribution network, as a result

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29 Thomas W. Simons, Jr. *Eurasia's New Frontiers: Young States, Old Societies, Open Futures*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008, pp. 70-81.

30 Анна Зейберт. "Баланс интересов Армении и России нуждается в переоценке". *Деловой Экспресс, Express.AM*, 2006, № 4, 9 - 15 февраля. [http://www.express.am/4\\_06/geopolitics.html](http://www.express.am/4_06/geopolitics.html); Haroutiun Khachatryan. "Russian Moves in Caucasus Energy and Power Sectors could have Geopolitical Impact". *Eurasia Insight. Eurasianet*, 2003, September 25, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav092503.shtml>.

31 Гаидз Минасян. "Армения, российский форпост на Кавказе?". *Russie.Nei. Visions*, 2008, No. 27, февраль, сс. 9-10, на сайте [http://www.ifri.org/files/Russie/ifri\\_RNV\\_minassian\\_Armenie\\_Russie\\_RUS\\_fevr2008.pdf](http://www.ifri.org/files/Russie/ifri_RNV_minassian_Armenie_Russie_RUS_fevr2008.pdf).

32 "Армянские железные дороги перешли под контроль России". BBC Russian, 2008, 4 июня, на сайте [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/russia/newsid\\_7435000/7435033.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/russia/newsid_7435000/7435033.stm); "Южно-Кавказская железная дорога приступила к работе". Информационный портал РЖД-Партнер, 2008, 3 июня. <http://www.rzd-partner.ru/news/2008/06/03/325229.html>.

33 American Electrochemical Society

of which RAO EES managed to control 75% of the country's electricity network.<sup>34</sup>

After the Rose Revolution the privatization price of many state owned companies was much higher than the price paid for the assets during Shevardnadze's period, but due to the lack of transparency, Russian companies and their daughter companies, registered in third countries, managed to buy most new offers. The Russian holding company 'Industrial investors' is one of them. It managed to get the main gold mine and then half of the factory producing gold alloy.<sup>35</sup>

The main instrument for Russia's foreign policy is Gazprom – the gas monopoly controlled by the state. Gazprom aimed at controlling not only Georgia's gas industry, but also the only gas pipeline which carries Russian gas to Georgia and Armenia. If the US had not interfered in the negotiations between Georgia and Gazprom on the sale of the pipeline to the latter,<sup>36</sup> the pipeline would be in Gazprom's hands.<sup>37</sup>

Gazprom is not the only judicial person implementing the Russian policy in the Caucasus. In 2004, Russia's state owned Vneshtorgbank bought controlling stake in the Armenian Armsberbank.<sup>38</sup> Next year, the Vneshtorgbank bought controlling stake in the privatized United Georgian Bank, the third biggest bank in Georgia.<sup>39</sup> Actually, the Vneshtorgbank nationalized the United Georgian Bank, but in this case its new owner became the Russian state.

As we see, this type of Russia's activity in Georgia that started even before the Rose Revolution significantly intensified after the revolution,<sup>40</sup> which was favored

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34 Tea Гуларидзе. “Чубайса в Тбилиси встретили акциями протеста”. *Civil Georgia*, 2003, 7 августа. <http://www.civil.ge/rus/article.php?id=3014&search=Tea%20Гуларидзе>.

35 “Активы Маднеули перешли к российской группе Промышленные инвесторы”. *Альфа-Металл*, 2005, 7 ноября. [http://www.alfametal.ru/?id=news\\_details&news\\_id=10505](http://www.alfametal.ru/?id=news_details&news_id=10505).

36 Jeremy D. Gordon. “Russia's Foreign Policy Ace”. *Paterson Review*, 2007, Vol. 8, pp. 85-86, , available at [http://www.diplomatonline.com/pdf\\_files/npsia/Paterson%20Review%20Vol%208%202007\\_BYPRESS2b.pdf](http://www.diplomatonline.com/pdf_files/npsia/Paterson%20Review%20Vol%208%202007_BYPRESS2b.pdf).

37 Дмитрий Коптюбенко. “«Газпрому» договорился с Грузией”. *РосБизнесКонсалтинг*, 2005, 29 декабря. <http://www.rbcdaily.ru/archive/2005/12/29/213127>; “Грузия согласна продать магистральный газопровод «Газпрому»”. *Лента.Ру*, 2005, 28 декабря. <http://www.lenta.ru/news/2005/12/28/gas1/>.

38 “«Внешторгбанк» приобрел контрольный пакет акций «Армсбербанка»”. *Ведомости*, 2004, 24 марта. <http://www.vedomosti.ru/newslines/news/2004/03/24/16606>.

39 “Внешторгбанк (ВТБ) России приобретает контрольный пакет акций коммерческого «Объединенного грузинского банка»”. *Финам.Ру*, 2005, 18 января. <http://www.finam.ru/investments/newsma000010201D/default.asp?ff=1>.

40 Владимир Папава, и Фредерик Старр. “Экономический империализм России”. *Project Syndicate*, 2006, 17 января. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/papava1/Russian/>; Vladimer Papava. “The Political Economy of Georgia's Rose Revolution”. *Orbis. A Journal of World Affairs*, 2006, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 663-665.

by the Georgian Government.<sup>41</sup>

Having said this, the idea that Georgia was considered to be totally lost for Russia does not seem to be correct.<sup>42</sup> Neither does it seem to be true that Georgia and Armenia are not economically very attractive for Russia,<sup>43</sup> since through involving these countries into the 'Liberal Empire' it becomes possible to involve also Azerbaijan, which is rich in carbohydrate resources.

Due to the above said, it is not at all surprising that the Russian side was not interested in developing a transport corridor through Georgia, or in constructing a pipeline, in particular. Moreover, it used (and still uses) any means to hinder the implementation of these projects.<sup>44</sup>

### **From the Pipeline 'Cold War' to 'Pipeline Harmonization'**

It has to be noted from the outset that in the Russian policy implemented in the post-Soviet space there is a certain interrelatedness between 'Energy Dependence' and 'Political Independence', i.e. the growth of the former reduces the latter.<sup>45</sup> It is not at all accidental that along with building the 'Liberal Empire' it is very important for Russia to form an 'Energy Empire' and steadily move in the direction of this objective.<sup>46</sup> This is largely grounded on Putin's myth about transforming Russia into an 'Energy Superpower.'<sup>47</sup> As a result, the energy policy of Moscow favors the formation of 'New Economic Imperialism,' extending not only to the outer world, but also to

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41 Vladimer Papava. "The Essence of Economic Reforms in Post-Revolution Georgia: What about the European Choice?". *Georgian International Journal of Science and Technology*, 2008, Vol. 1, Iss. 1, p. 3.

42 Сергей Лунев. "Центральная Азия и Южный Кавказ как геополитические регионы и их значение для России". *Центральная Азия и Кавказ*, 2006, № 3 (45), с. 26.

43 Ibid

44 Steve LeVin. *The Oil and the Glory: The Pursuit of Empire and Fortune on the Caspian Sea*. New York: Random House 2007; Alexander Rondeli. "Pipelines and Security Dynamics in the Caucasus". *Insight Turkey*, 2002, Vol. 4, No 1; Mamuka Tsereteli. "Beyond Georgia: Russia's Strategic Interests in Eurasia". *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*, 2008, June 11, available at <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4879>.

45 Keith C. Smith. *Russian Energy Politics in the Baltics, Poland, and Ukraine. A New Stealth Imperialism?* Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2004, pp. 5-8.

46 Fiona Hill. *Energy Empire: Oil, Gas and Russia's Revival*. London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2004, available at <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/307.pdf>.

47 Lilia Shevtsova. *Russia Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007, pp. 133, 194.

Russia itself and its domestic economy.<sup>48</sup> In this context, the Russian energy strategy needs to be considered also in relation to Europe.<sup>49</sup>

At present, Russia, driven by the so-called 'energy egoism,' which is a constituent part of its nationalist view of the world,<sup>50</sup> does its best to reach a dominant position in the Caspian basin.<sup>51</sup>

Implementation of the cooperation and partnership principles in the Caucasus might guarantee that their interests will be met. However, unfortunately, it is just Russia that finds it most difficult to understand and follow these principles.<sup>52</sup> For example, even Russian experts admit that Iran and Armenia are Russia's strategic partners in opposing the creation of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transportation corridor.<sup>53</sup> Both Russian and Iranian experts emphasize that Russia's and Iran's interests in the region overlap with each other.<sup>54</sup> This, especially, concerns Caspian energy resources (but not only).<sup>55</sup> Russian experts also admit that Russia is waging 'energy war' with some

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48 Marshall I. Goldman. "Moscow's New Economic Imperialism". *Current History*, 2008, Vol. 107, Iss. 711, October; Marshall I. Goldman. *Petrostate: Putin, Power, and the new Russia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 172-176.

49 Janusz Bugajski. *Expanding Eurasia: Russia's European Ambitions*. Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2008.

50 Vladimir Milov. *Russia and the West. The Energy Factor*. Washington D.C.: CSIS, 2008, p. 18, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080731\\_milov\\_russia&west\\_web.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080731_milov_russia&west_web.pdf).

51 Сергей Благов. "Россия: в поисках путей укрепления энергетических позиций в Каспийском бассейне". *Eurasia Insight. Eurasianet – На русском языке*, 2008, 8 октября. <http://russian.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav100808ru.shtml>.

52 например, Vladimir Papava. "Strategic Economic Partnership in Caucasus". *Caucasica. The Journal of Caucasian Studies*, 1998, Vol. 2; Vladimir Papava, and Nino Gogatadze. "Prospects for Foreign Investments and Strategic Economic Partnership in the Caucasus". *Problems of Economic Transition*, 1998, Vol. 41, No. 5; Natalia V. Zubarevich, and Yuri E. Fedorov. "Russian-Southern Economic Interaction: Partners or Competitors?". In Rajan Menon, Yuri E. Fedorov, and Ghia Nodia, eds. *Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia: The 21st Century Security Environment*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1999.

53 В.С. Загашвили. "Нефть, транспортная политика, интересы России". В кн.: Р.М. Аваков, и А.Г. Лисов, ред., *Россия и Закавказье: реалии независимости и новое партнерство*. Москва: Финстатинформ, 2000, с. 188.

54 Svante E. Cornell. "Iran and the Caucasus: The Triumph of Pragmatism over Ideology". *Global Dialogue*, 2001, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 85-88; Robert O. Freedman. "Russia and Iran: A Tactical Alliance". *S AIS Review of International Affairs*, 1997, Vol. XVII, No. 2.

55 К.С. Гаджиев. *Геополитика Кавказа*. Москва: «Международные отношения», 2003, сс. 432, 434-439; Д.Б. Мальшева. "Турция и Иран: Закавказье – объект старого соперничества". В кн.: Р.М. Аваков, и А.Г. Лисов, ред., *Россия и Закавказье: реалии независимости и новое партнерство*. Москва: Финстатинформ, 2000; Abbas Maleki. "Does the Caspian Remain Important to all Actors?". *Amu Darya. The Iranian Journal of Central Asian Studies*, 2003/2004, Vol. 8, No. 16 & 17.

of the former Soviet republics, including Georgia and Azerbaijan.<sup>56</sup>

Appropriateness of such an evaluation of the Russia's position on the transportation of Caspian energy resources via Georgia became evident during the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008, when the Russian aviation bombed, among other things, the pipelines running via the territory of Georgia.<sup>57</sup> These pipelines are located far from South Ossetia, the protection of which was claimed to be the reason of the war. This made questionable the security of the transport corridor through which the pipelines run on the Georgian territory.<sup>58</sup> In addition, this contributed to the increased danger of losing economic independence by Azerbaijan.<sup>59</sup> Luckily, it did not take too long to rebuild trust regarding the transportation of energy resources through Georgia.<sup>60</sup> The fact that Moscow did not manage to exercise control over these pipelines through military means,<sup>61</sup> that is to fully monopolize the routes for the transportation of energy resources running from the former USSR in the direction of the West, even more

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56 С.Б. Дружиловский. “К вопросу об альтернативной стратегии Российской Федерации в сфере энергетической политики”. В кн.: Н.П. Шмелев, В.А. Гусейнов, и А.А. Язькова, ред., *Средиземноморье – Черноморье – Каспий: между Большой Европой и Большим Ближним Востоком*. Москва: Издательский дом «Граница», 2006, с. 80.

57 Alexander Jackson. “IA Forum Interview: Vladimer Papava”. *International Affairs Forum*, 2008, August 14, available at <http://ia-forum.org/Content/ViewInternalDocument.cfm?ContentID=6377>.

58 Stephen F. Jones. “Clash in the Caucasus: Georgia, Russia, and the Fate of South Ossetia”. *Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective*, 2008, Vol. 2, iss. 2, available at <http://ehistory.osu.edu/osu/origins/article.cfm?articleid=20>; Jad Mouawad. “Conflict Narrows Oil Options for West”. *The New York Times*, 2008, August 13, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/14/world/europe/14oil.html>; John Roberts. “Georgia falls victim to pipeline politics”. *BBC News*, 2008, August 12, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7557049.stm>.

It should be noted that raising doubts about the security of the pipelines running through Georgia was one of the aims of the Russian aggression (Pierre Hassner. “One Cold War Among Many?”. *Survival*, 2008, Vol. 50, No. 4, p. 250).

59 Svante E. Cornell. “War in Georgia, Jitters All Around”. *Current History*, 2008, Vol. 107, Iss. 711, October, p. 312, available at <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2007/0810CH.pdf>; Fariz Ismailzade. “The Georgian-Russian Conflict through the Eyes of Baku”. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 2008, Vol. 5, No. 154, August 11, available at [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=33881](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33881).

60 Vladimir Socor. “Business Confidence Returning to the South Caucasus Transport Corridor”. *Eurasia Daily Monitor; The Jamestown Foundation*, 2008, Vol. 5, No. 186, September 28, available at [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=33978](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=33978).

61 Ariel Cohen, and Lajos F. Szaszdi. “Russia’s Drive for Global Economic Power: A Challenge for the Obama Administration”. *The Heritage Foundation*, 2009, Backgrounder No. 2235, January 30, available at <http://www.heritage.org/research/RussiaandEurasia/bg2235.cfm>.

encouraged Americans and Europeans to take efforts and search for alternative ways of gas and oil transportation.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, the strengthening of the security of the existing pipelines on the territories of Azerbaijan and Georgia is becoming a topical issue for Ankara, Brussels and Washington.<sup>63</sup> It is no less important that Kazakhstan, which has close ties with Russia, is also quite interested in the security of the transport corridor running through Azerbaijan in the direction of Georgia.<sup>64</sup> The Caucasian energy corridor is becoming one of the major issues for the US administration.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, many states interested in the diversification of the pipeline network are also making serious efforts.<sup>66</sup>

All the above said shows the importance of new approaches to the diversification of the pipeline network, which has to be based, in the first place, on the replacement of the established paradigm of the so-called ‘alternative pipelines.’

Nowadays, the carbohydrate resources of the Caspian basin are regarded as alternatives to Russian carbohydrate resources and the pipelines transporting oil and gas (at present or in the future) from the Caspian basin to western markets bypassing Russia are considered to be ‘alternatives’ to the pipelines running through Russia’s territory. The term ‘alternative’ implies Russia’s confrontation with other countries. In other words, what we have is ‘pipeline confrontation’ or pipeline ‘cold war’ between Russia, on the one hand, and the West together with the transit states, on the other.

The examples of the Baku-Tbilisi-Supsa and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipelines as well as of the South Caucasian gas pipeline illustrate the artificial character of such understanding of pipeline network development. In particular, the oil transported through these pipelines constitutes only 10% of Russian oil exports and the

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62 Ivan Krastev. “Russia and the Georgia war: the great-power trap.” *Open Democracy News Analysis*, 2008, August 31, available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/russia-and-the-georgia-war-the-great-power-trap>.

63 Jon E. Chicky. *The Russian-Georgian War: Political and Military Implications for U.S. Policy*. Policy Paper, February. Washington, D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, 2009, p. 12, available at <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0902Chicky.pdf>.

64 Nargis Kassenova. “Kazakhstan and the South Caucasus corridor in the wake of the Georgia-Russia war”. *EUCAM, EU–Central Asia Monitoring Policy Brief*, No. 3, 2009, January 29, available at [http://shop.ceps.eu/BookDetail.php?item\\_id=1786](http://shop.ceps.eu/BookDetail.php?item_id=1786).

65 Svante E. Cornell. “Pipeline Power. The War in Georgia and the Future of the Caucasian Energy Corridor”. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 2009, vol. 10, no. 1, available at <http://www.isdp.eu/files/publications/scornell/GJIA-2009.pdf>.

66 Paul Goble. “Nabucco After Budapest: Old Problems, New Challenges and a Changed Role for Azerbaijan”. *Azerbaijan in the World. The Electronic Publication of Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy*, 2009, Vol. I, No. 3, February 1, available at <http://www.ada.edu.az/biweekly/issues/164/20090329011708234.html>.

gas transported through the South Caucasian pipeline – 2% of Russian gas exports.<sup>67</sup> Given the proportion between the amount of oil transported by these pipelines and the total volume of Russian exports, the named three pipelines can hardly play the role of ‘alternative’ pipelines in relation to Russia. In reality, the three pipelines together with those running through Russian territories supplement each other. It is important, indeed, to have independent pipeline systems to ensure continuous gas and oil supply to customers even in unforeseen situations (e.g. malfunctioning for some technical reasons).

Therefore, it is necessary to shift from the ‘alternative pipeline paradigm’ to the ‘mutually supplementary pipelines’ or ‘pipeline harmonization’ paradigm.<sup>68</sup> The latter is based on the partnership mechanisms interrelating those subjects who deal with gas and oil extraction, transportation and use. It is just consensus between all the parties that serves as a basis for ‘pipeline harmonization.’

It is very important to consider already discussed projects (*White stream, Nabucco, North stream, South stream*) within the ‘pipeline harmonization’ paradigm. For this purpose it is extremely important that all the interested parties take a decision to cooperate with each other so that the users are provided with an uninterrupted energy supply.

### **The Kremlin’s dualism or two different approaches applied to the same country**

Russia applied to Georgia two approaches even before the Russia-Georgia war in August 2008. It would be enough to recall the following: The visa regime introduced by Russia for Georgian citizens did not apply to the Georgian citizens residing on the Abkhazian and South Ossetian territories. Later, Moscow initiated a free distribution of Russian passports to the residents of the named regions to strengthen Russia’s position, i.e. Russia could justify any military action by the protection of its own citizens.

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67 See for more detail (Vladimer Papava, Sabit Bagirov, Leonid Grigoriev, Wojciech Paczynski, Marcel Salikhov, and Micheil Tokmazishvili. *Energy Trade and Cooperation Between the EU and CIS Countries*. CASE Network Reports, No. 83. Warsaw: CASE-Center for Social and Economic Research, 2009, available at [http://www.case.com.pl/upload/publikacja\\_plik/23703888\\_CNR\\_83\\_final.pdf](http://www.case.com.pl/upload/publikacja_plik/23703888_CNR_83_final.pdf)).

68 Vladimer Papava, and Michael Tokmazishvili. “Pipeline Harmonization Instead of Alternative Pipelines: Why the Pipeline “Cold War” Needs to End.” *Azerbaijan in the World. The Electronic Publication of Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy*, 2008, Vol. I, No. 10, June 15, available at <http://www.ada.edu.az/biweekly/issues/150/20090327030535315.html>; Vladimer Papava. “Russian Energy Politics and the EU: How to Change the Paradigm.” *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 2010, Vol. 4 (2) – Spring available at [http://www.cria-online.org/Journal/11/Done\\_Russian\\_Energy\\_Politics\\_and\\_EU\\_How\\_to\\_Change\\_the\\_Paradigm\\_by\\_Vladimer\\_Papava\\_and\\_Michael\\_Tokmazishvili.pdf](http://www.cria-online.org/Journal/11/Done_Russian_Energy_Politics_and_EU_How_to_Change_the_Paradigm_by_Vladimer_Papava_and_Michael_Tokmazishvili.pdf).

The war in August 2008 fully fits into this scheme.

Having recognized the independence of both separatist regions, Moscow found itself in a paradoxical situation: It recognized the independence of two territorial entities the population of which was mainly represented by Russian citizens. Although the Kremlin likes to draw a comparison between Kosovo and Abkhazia-South Ossetia, we should keep in mind that before recognizing Kosovo's independence, neither the US nor any other country encouraged the residents to accept their citizenship.<sup>69</sup>

Moscow's decision to ban Georgian agricultural products in Russia was not applied to Abkhazia<sup>70</sup>, although that time the Kremlin was too far from recognizing its independence. Following Russia, Abkhazia also banned Georgian wines and mineral waters.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, Moscow took a totally different decision regarding Abkhazian wines.<sup>72</sup> All this was taking place long before the Russia-Georgia war in August 2008, not to mention the recognition of independence of the two Georgian regions.

At the same time, Moscow was not very much concerned about the fact that the conflict territories actually in the entire post-Soviet space, including the Caucasus, were developing not only into the stronghold of terrorism and a shelter for criminals in drug trafficking and drug trade business, but also into the zones for money laundering, kidnapping and human trafficking.<sup>73</sup> In parallel, Russia threatened Georgia with war because of the Pankisi George long before the beginning of actual military actions.<sup>74</sup>

In other words, Moscow has been applying to Georgia two models of economic (and not only economic) relations for a long time, now. One of the models is meant for the separatist regions, the other – for the rest of Georgia.

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69 Владимир Папава. “Россия: железная хватка Кремля”. *Eurasianet – На русском языке*, 2008, 7 ноября, на сайте <http://russian.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110708aru.shtml>.

70 Евгений Арсюхин. “Оранжевое предупреждение. Россия запретила ввоз грузинских фруктов”. Российская газета, 2005, 21 декабря, на сайте <http://www.rg.ru/2005/12/21/mandariny.html>.

71 “Вслед за Россией грузинские вина и минеральные воды запретила Абхазия”. *News.Ru*, 2006, 15 мая, на сайте <http://www.newsru.com/finance/15may2006/abhasia.html>.

72 Анатолий Гордиенко. “Винно-политический обгон. «Букет Абхазии» вернется на российский рынок раньше «Хванчкары»”. *Независимая газета*, 2007, 17 октября, на сайте [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2007-10-17/6\\_obgon.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2007-10-17/6_obgon.html); “Абхазия возобновит экспорт вина в Россию”. *Алкогольный портал*, 2007, 8 октября, на сайте <http://tatalc.ru/tatalc2/?pg=3&bl=1&md=2&idoc=11139>.

73 Алла Язькова. “Южный Кавказ: уравнение со многими неизвестными”. *Вестник аналитики*, 2005, No. 2 (20), сс. 57-58.

74 Владимир Волков. “Россия угрожает Грузии войной”. *World Socialist Web Site*, 2002, 21 сентября, на сайте <http://www.wsws.org/ru/2002/sep2002/geor-s20.shtml>.

This tendency has been naturally maintained since Moscow recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence. By the way, the part of the world that supported Moscow's initiative can be hardly called a progressive part of world civilization.<sup>75</sup> By recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia even more reinforced their economic (and not only economic) integration into Russia. Nowadays, these separatist regions, like other regions in Russia, openly receive financial aid from Russia's federal budget. For example, according to the information from the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, the amount of financial aid to South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2010-2011 will make up no less than 5,16 billion rubles.<sup>76</sup>

Unofficially, Abkhazia and South Ossetia have the same legal status as the residents of Russian autonomies. As citizens of Abkhazia and South Ossetia they can take part in local elections; as the citizens of Russia they can elect the President of Russia and Parliament. To go abroad, the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia can use their Russian passports.

In addition to the above said, these regions are being militarized. This is an intense process which is implemented through setting up Russian military bases.<sup>77</sup>

Here is a scenario that is quite likely to take place in the future: After making the right pause, the Kremlin will give an assignment to the puppet governments of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to hold a referendum on joining the Russian Federation. It is not difficult to predict referendum outcomes. We can also expect that Moscow will offer some artful justification of this kind of annexation. It might declare, for example, that since the international community (except for Russia and several less respectable countries) is still slow to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the only thing their population can do is to become a part of Russia. In other words, the Kremlin will try to put all the blame on the West, which, due to its reluctance to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, will 'force' Russia to make these two territories into its members.<sup>78</sup>

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75 Following Russia, the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was recognized by Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru

76 "Высказывания А.Г. Силуанова информационным агентствам по итогам подписания соглашений между Министерством финансов РФ и Министерствами финансов Республики Абхазия и Республики Южная Осетия". *Министерство финансов Российской Федерации*, 2009, 17 марта, на сайте <http://www.minfin.ru/ru/press/speech/index.php?id4=7186>.

77 "Выведа войска из буферных зон, Россия начала разворачивать военные базы в Абхазии и Южной Осетии". *News.Ru*, 2008, 10 октября, <http://www.newsru.com/world/10oct2008/base.html>; "Россия разворачивает военные базы в Абхазии и Южной Осетии". *Грани.Ру*, 2008, 10 октября <http://grani.ru/Politics/Russia/m.142556.html>; "РФ будет обустривать военные базы в Абхазии и ЮО и после 2009 года". *РИА Новости*, 2009, 9 января [http://www.rian.ru/defense\\_safety/20090109/158796550.html](http://www.rian.ru/defense_safety/20090109/158796550.html)

78 Владимир Папава. "Россия: железная хватка Кремля".

In the situation like this, the normalization of economic relations between Georgia and Russia (along with other issues, of course) does not seem to be easily achievable. The real solution of this problem is only possible in case the Kremlin stops applying dual approach to Georgia.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the past economic relations between post-Soviet Russia and Georgia points to a number of problems. The fact that these problems have not been solved yet does not actually hinder the export of labor force from Georgia into Russia and the import of Russian capital into Georgia. In addition to this, these relations are not always identically perceived by Georgian and Russian communities: Russians are concerned about high number of labor migrants (coming not only from Georgia), whereas Georgians are scared of Russian investments perceived as a means to involve Georgia into the ‘Liberal Empire.’

Confrontation between Russia and the West regarding the provision of uninterrupted gas and oil supply (also bypassing Russia) has lasted for many years. As a result, Georgia, as a transit state, has many times found itself in a difficult situation. It’s time to radically change approach to the transportation of energy resources. In particular, it is necessary to shift from the ‘alternative pipeline’ paradigm, which is the basis of pipeline ‘cold war’ to a new paradigm – ‘pipeline harmonization’ paradigm, which implies cooperation in the development of a pipeline network. Such cooperation will involve not only producers and users of energy resources, but also all the transit countries.

The Georgia-Russia war in August 2008 and Russia’s recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the status of independent states largely deteriorated Georgia-Russia relations. Unfortunately, there is no doubt that among other things Moscow applied two models of the economic approach to Georgia. One of them was meant for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the other—for the rest of Georgia. Such a dual approach was even more reinforced after Russia’s recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. At the same time, less aggressive economic policy towards Georgia (we know that Russia’s economic aggression resulted in banning Georgian products, cancelling flights between the two countries, etc)<sup>79</sup>, will not dramatically change their relationship without

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79 Leaders of the two countries recently made announcements regarding the possibility of recommencing flights and opening the Upper Larsi checkpoint (See “Грузия готова открыть воздушное сообщение с Россией”. *Деловой Петербург*, 2009, 12 декабря, на сайте [http://www.dp.ru/a/2009/12/10/Gruzija\\_gotova\\_otkrit\\_voz](http://www.dp.ru/a/2009/12/10/Gruzija_gotova_otkrit_voz); “Грузия готова возобновить воздушное сообщение с Россией”. *Сибирское Агентство Новостей – Новосибирск*, 2009, 12 декабря, на сайте <http://nsk.sibnovosti.ru/articles/92894>).

restoring Georgia's territorial integrity (the territorial integrity required by Georgia is not an extraordinary, because for Russia the problem of the territorial integrity is doubtless). It would be also a mistake to wait until Russia changes its previous decision on the recognition of independence of the two regions (which would mark the beginning of their integration into Georgia) and not to make any efforts to more or less normalize relationship between the residents of Russia and Georgia, irrespective of their citizenship. Establishing basic interpersonal and economic relations is not something you can put on the shelf.

*Andrey Ryabov*

## **Russia's Policy towards Georgia after the War in August 2008: The Main Approaches and Influencing Factors**

This article attempts to review Russia's policy toward Georgia after the war in August 2008. It analyses different approaches applied by the given policy as well as the factors actively influencing its development and implementation.

### **The evolution of Russian priorities**

Since August 2008, Russian policy towards Georgia has gone through several stages. At the beginning, i.e. during the first months after the war, the main task was to minimize the political and diplomatic damage caused by the war. It had a negative impact on Russia's international image and negatively influenced Russia's relations with the US and EU countries, in the first place. It became urgent to avoid a deeper confrontation with the West because of the 'Georgian problem.' At the same time, Russian diplomacy tried to turn any negotiations, which dealt with the post-war resolution of problems and during which foreign partners touched upon the necessity of restoring Georgia's territorial integrity, into routine discussions. A bit later, when the Russia-US tension caused by the war somewhat decreased, Moscow focused its efforts on ensuring Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's maximum presence in different international forums (humanitarian, first of all). It also launched a process leading to the recognition of those entities in the status of independent states, but since it became

clear immediately after the war that the CIS and China were not going to recognize their independence, Russia limited itself to their recognition by several countries. Although these countries are situated far from the Caucasus and play an insignificant role in the world and regional policy, such an act on their part would create a precedent for the recognition of the former Georgian autonomies by other countries.

Soon after the war, which meant a collapse of the previous international order in the Caucasus, Russian political and diplomatic circles still recognized the importance of the restoration of the regional security system (or the creation of such a system) to ensure a long-term stability in the Black Sea basin. At the same time, it was clear for Moscow that such a system could not be formed without Georgia. They believed, however, that stabilization in the region could be achieved through establishing confederative relations between Georgia and its former autonomies.<sup>1</sup> Since it was not suitable for Tbilisi to restore the regional security system in this form, at the end of 2008, the possibility of the implementation of like plans was envisaged in the remote future. It was perceived by Moscow as a secondary task in the new international context, not requiring an urgent solution. This was also largely determined by certain beliefs: The Russian ruling circles were absolutely confident that as a result of the war Russia had solved, for a certain period, its main security problems in the region. Georgia's joining NATO was removed from the current agenda; also, the threat of restoring Abkhazia and South Ossetia to Georgian control stopped to exist. An idea circulating among experts was that Russia did not need anything from Georgia and, for this reason; the Russian Federation could postpone the restoration of relations to some remote future. This statement needs some explanation. The interpretation of the underlying concept of 'Russia's interests' implies, above all, the provision of national security guarantees and the satisfaction of large corporations' interests. From this perspective, nothing would make Georgia attractive for Russia in the post-war period. At the same time, medium size Russian business, which happily operates in Georgia even after the August war, does not fall under this concept. For this reason, the Russian authorities are not very much concerned about the fate of the companies operating in Georgia.

Another, less discussed reason for the lack of interest in Georgia in the new, post-war situation, was the following: The war, actually, changed the paradigm of Russia's foreign policy. In the past, Russia positioned itself in international matters as a super-power maintaining status quo. The official Moscow emphasized this principle when pursuing its policy in the post-Soviet space. The war followed by the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence placed the Russian Federation among revisionist states who attempted to at least change the existing regional order. It seems

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1 Мальгин А. Конфедерация по-кавказски: чтобы стабилизировать грузинскую государственность, необходимо выходить на формы асимметричного, многоуровневого устройства //Независимая газета, 11 ноября 2008 года.

Russia was not quite ready for this role. It had neither the corresponding ideas to develop a new strategy for long-term actions, nor the resources enabling it to change the existing regional order.

The world economic crisis of 2008 largely released the tension between Russia and the West resulting from the August war. It diverted the US' and its other allies' attention from the South Caucasus. In the situation like this, Russian diplomacy managed to reject the 'Medvedev – Sarkozy plan', as an initially agreed basis for peaceful regulation of the problem, and channel the debates about war outcomes into routine negotiations. Abkhazia and South Ossetia joined the Geneva negotiations. This made it easier for Russia to actually reinforce the outcomes of the war. Later, the Russian government concluded agreements with the Abkhazian and South Ossetian Authorities on the deployment of Russia's military bases on their territories. And although it turned out impossible to achieve a wide recognition of the former autonomies, the results of the first post-war months were favorable for Russia judging by its short-term perspectives and the threats of direct military conflict with the US that were left behind.

When President Obama's administration came to power, a totally new situation started to form in the post-Soviet space. Russia's policy towards Georgia also underwent serious changes. For many different reasons having a primary importance for the US (severity of the Afghanistan and Pakistan problems, the situation with the Iran nuclear program, necessity of fighting economic crisis both globally and within the US), Washington refused to play active political games in the post-Soviet space and rejected the idea of expanding democracy to the East which was so popular during the young Bush administration. In addition, Obama's choice was clearly influenced by his government's interest in cooperating with Russia in a number of directions important in international policy. This first of all applied to the regime of spreading nuclear weapons, Iran's nuclear program and the Afghanistan problem.

In November 2009, in Russia's information space appeared vague signals pointing to the readiness of Russia's government to start dialogue for the purpose of the normalization of its relations with Georgia. They also implied that Russia could facilitate the resolution of Georgia's conflict with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, if Tbilisi totally rejected its pro-western orientation in foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> Despite being sensational, like messages could not seriously change Russia's policy toward Georgia. They just reflected the fact that in Moscow's political circles there was a growing understanding of the necessity to take some steps in this direction. At the same time, the implementation of any measures aimed at the recommencement of relations with Georgia, faced numerous unsolvable problems.

The main problem was that the Russian side was categorically against any kind of

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2 'The issue of Georgia's reintegration is solvable'. This is what V. Putin allegedly said at E. Primakov's 80-year anniversary // <http://www.gazeta.ru/column/rynska/3287611.shtml>;

cooperation with President M. Saakashvili. Given the situation like this, the search for ‘bypass routes’ became a key issue. This, in its turn, assumed the development of a possible agenda of the day in the first place, and then the identification of new partners who this agenda would apply to.

### **Is it possible to develop a new agenda of the day?**

A search for mutually acceptable agenda started already late autumn 2008. It was thought possible to change Georgia’s attitude to Russia and Russian policy without paying attention to the authorities operating in Tbilisi. This could be done, for example, through the restoration of cultural links between the two countries. Such an idea seemed to be easiest to implement. However, it soon became clear that like approach was quite counterproductive and not only because the restoration of cultural links at a large scale turned out to be difficult in the post-war period. Georgian society’s reaction made it evident that it was hardly possible to renew dialogue without discussing acute political issues, and, territorial issues, in the first place.

We know from modern history that, sometimes, the party that lost military conflict agreed to admit its territorial losses. For example, after the World War II, Finland admitted that it had lost a part of Karelian Isthmus and some other territories that became parts of Karelia-Finland Soviet Socialist Republic and Murmansk Oblast of the USSR. The conflict around the former Yugoslavian autonomous krai Kosovo is taking such a direction that sooner or later Serbia will recognize its independence in exchange for its membership to the Euro-Atlantic structures. Serbia might get back a part of Northern **Kosovo**, the area **populated mainly** by ethnic Serbs.

However, like methods used for the solution of post-war problems cannot be applied to Georgia. During the World War II, Finland was an ally of Nazi Germany and in this status turned out to be among the countries that had incurred territorial losses. Such a solution quite fitted the super powers’ strategy of solving territorial problems in post-war Europe and was legitimized by the international community. Despite losing control over Kosovo after the bombing of its territories by NATO forces in March 1999, the majority of Serbia’s population envisages the future of its country within the North Atlantic Alliance and European Union. Such a perspective is more attractive than the struggle for the restoration of territorial integrity which has no chances for success. The Georgian case is very different. First, the largest part of its population finds the loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia unacceptable. Secondly, differently from Finland and Serbia, its territorial integrity is still recognized by, actually, the whole international community. At the same time, the forecasts made in the Russian press regarding Russia’s assistance to Georgia in regaining control over its former autonomies if Georgia refuses to pursue pro-western foreign policy, also

seems to be groundless. The fact that the rejection of earlier decisions might lead to damaged internal and external reputation for the state having an ambition of super power, is not the only reason. If we consider the importance of the Cherkessian and Ossetian factor for the stability of the Russian North Caucasus, we will have to admit that official Moscow will hardly take such a risk for the purpose of the regulation of its bilateral relations with Georgia.

The ideas that occurred during the improvement of Russian-American relations in 2010 were no less illusory. Although these were only vague rumors, the fact of their occurrence can be interpreted as a sort of indication. The rumors basically said that a sort of territorial exchange could take place between Russia and Georgia and that Obama's administration was OK about it. They said that in exchange for Georgia's recognition of Abkhazia's independence Russia agreed to return South Ossetia to Tbilisi. In reality, the government in Washington, which held firmly to its position regarding the territorial integrity of Georgia, made it clear that it did not have any specific recipes for doing that. Given wishful thinking, this could be interpreted as Washington's agreement to freeze the situation. However, according to conservative critics of Obama's external policy, his administration has actually admitted that the post-Soviet space is a zone of Russia's privileged interests. For instance, D. Kramer, former deputy assistant US secretary in the Bush Jr administration, thinks that to reinforce cooperation with Moscow in some important directions of world policy, Obama might even stop insisting on the necessity of withdrawing Russian troops from the territories of Moldova and Georgia (i.e. Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria - *Author's comment*).<sup>3</sup> And yet, many experts and politicians in Russia believe that it is not at all probable that Russia and the US will negotiate the issue of the territorial integrity of Georgia in the near future. The probability of this equals zero. During his October 2009 visit to Moscow, Michael McFaul, special assistant to the US President, noted that the differences on the issue of Georgian borders was the only fundamental difference in Russia-US relations and that the parties would not be able to resolve it.<sup>4</sup> By the way, Saakashvili also publicly expressed skepticism regarding the possibility of this kind of deal.<sup>5</sup>

Changes in Georgia's policy towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia can hardly influence Moscow's policy towards Georgia. Moscow did not actually react to 'State strategy on occupied territories: Engagement through cooperation', developed by the Georgian Ministry of Reintegration and published in January 2010. The ruling circles in Russia seem to believe that like strategy has no chance to succeed firstly because of negative attitude of Abkhazian and South Ossetian governments towards any efforts

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3 Kramer D. U.S. Abandoning Russia's neighbors // Washington Post, May 15, 2010

4 Quoted. <http://www.grani.ru/Politics/World/US/m/16-614.html>;

5 Le Monde, Juin 8, 2010

to involve them into Georgian orbit of influence.

Sometimes Russian and foreign experts say that Russia's policy toward Georgia may dramatically change in case the leading global and regional super-powers like the US, the EU, China, Turkey and Iran recognize at least Abkhazia's independence. If this happens, Abkhazia will try to become less dependent on Russia, which will irritate Moscow, and, as a result, increase its interest in getting closer to Georgia. It is difficult not to agree with the statement that Moscow would like to maintain its status of Abkhazia's main, if not the only, international partner in the future. Today, however, such a scheme looks an abstraction that has nothing to do with the reality of current policy. The named scheme is quite vulnerable, because none of these global or regional super-powers is going to consider, in the foreseeable future, the possibility of the diplomatic recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence.

Therefore, as the situation analysis shows, no political dialogue is expected to take place between Russia and Georgia at present. The parties hold diametrically different positions and there is extremely little room left for maneuvers. Global players (the US, first of all) seem to have very little possibility to influence the conflicting parties and impel them to hold dialogue.

Given the fact that Georgia and Russia are neighbors and that the most important transport and transit routes in the South Caucasus run through the Georgian territory, the most important theme for bilateral relations will still be the restoration of economic and humanitarian cooperation. After the negative experience of 2006-2008, the Russian ruling circles came to the conclusion that using economic and commercial restrictions, embargo, and like measures as instruments of political pressure seem to be ineffective in case of Georgia. For this reason, Moscow is pragmatic about the restoration of economic cooperation in the areas of common interest. Despite this, it prefers to take its time so that no one thinks in Georgia or in the international community that Russia is personally interested in recommencing this kind of cooperation. Anyway, positive steps are still made from time to time. For example, in January 2009, the Russian electric power company *Интер РАО ЕЭС* and the Georgian government made an agreement on the joint operation of the Inguri hydroelectric power station and the utilization of the produced electric power despite the Abakhzian side's negative attitude to such an arrangement.<sup>6</sup> Experts do not rule out the possibility of productive contacts between these two countries regarding some issues of energy transit through Georgia. After the beginning of Armenia-Turkey dialogue, Russian officials became less concerned about Georgia's possible attempts to undermine Russia's dominance on the energy transit routes running from Central Asia to Europe. However, the restoration of transit railway routes through Georgia, periodic interruptions in Russian gas supply to Armenia as well as in the provision of Armenian goods to the Russian

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6 See for more detail [http://www.newsru.com/finance/12jan2009/inguri\\_print.html](http://www.newsru.com/finance/12jan2009/inguri_print.html);

Federation, remain to be serious and painful issues, hindering the normalization of bilateral trade and economic relations. It seems that at a certain point Russia might make a decision to lift the ban on wines and mineral waters - traditional Georgian exports into Russia. However, some people think that such a step on Russia's part might not be positively perceived by Georgians, because it might be interpreted as an act of condescension, as the Northern brother's attempt to emphasize the fact that bilateral relations can be only unequal.

If we take into consideration the existence of close interpersonal contacts, traditional ties between Georgian and Russia citizens, and the restoration of regular transport links between the two countries might turn out to be very important, indeed. Although the corresponding negotiations were long and difficult, and were repeatedly interrupted, the parties still managed to achieve certain progress. On March 1, 2010, the Upper Lars border crossing was put into operation. An agreement was reached on the renewal of charter flights between Tbilisi and Moscow for summer 2010. These were to be operated by the two countries' air companies - Georgian Airways and Russian S-7 (former 'Siberia'). It seems that the gradual restoration of economic and humanitarian ties and transport links is a modest start for realistic progress in bilateral relations.

### **In search of partners**

Moscow's policy towards Georgia faced another huge challenge in the post-war period. This is a search of partners for dialogue with Tbilisi. The Russian authorities, who put all the blame for the August conflict on President Saakashvili, excluded him from the list of potential partners. It seems that during a certain period after the war, the Russian ruling circles believed that Georgia's defeat would inevitably cause internal political crisis in Georgia, which would force Saakashvili to resign from his post. This would change the situation and create conditions for the recommencement of political dialogue with Tbilisi. However, the Russian authorities did not think much about who would hold the dialogue with Russia from the Georgian side. However, after the confrontation between the authorities and the opposition in Tbilisi that took place in April 2009, Moscow arrived at the conclusion that the political regime in Georgia was stable enough and that Saakashvili's team could preserve power even after Saakashvili resigned from the president's post in 2013, as provided for by the Constitution of Georgia. In the situation like this close relations between the Russian authorities and some opposition leaders (Z. Nougaideli, N. Burjanadze, and I. Alasania, to a lesser extent) developed into a long-term political game. It looks that the establishment of like contacts did not aim at a relatively rapid replacement of the authorities in Tbilisi. The task was to demonstrate to Georgian people that only through the renewal of political dialogue with Russia it was possible to achieve a real improvement of bilateral relations as well as of the social and economic condition of

the republic. Through the utilization of certain illustrative measures (e.g. Upper Lars opening was presented as the implementation of measures promised by Nogaideli to Moscow) it was attempted to convince Georgians that their reliance on a close alliance with the West was groundless, that America was far and did not have time for Georgian problems. At the same time, Europe, which was suffering from economic crisis, would not be able to provide to Tbilisi effective economic assistance. Only traditional pro-Russian orientation would guarantee a normal development of Georgia. However, like actions did not affect Georgian public's western orientation. At the same time, inability to change public opinion will hardly strengthen the position of those military and political circles that are interested in a rapid replacement of President M. Saakashvili. However, a general weakening of pro-western orientation (resulting from the global financial and economic crisis) in most post-Soviet states might, theoretically, make some Russian politicians think that in the new situation Saakashvili remains the only leader who, by his political and value orientations, is not 'our guy' in this region, which impedes the normalization of political situation in the South Caucasus. However, given Russia's general objective in the post-crisis period to improve its relationship with the West, such opinions are likely to be of secondary importance among different approaches to the external policy promoted by Russia's ruling elite. In the long-term perspective it will have to look for new ideas, when, in Tbilisi, there is the government they want to deal with.

However, according to another commonly held point of view Moscow does not intend to undermine the legitimacy of Saakashvili's regime. Just the opposite. It is interested in its preservation, because this enables Russia to maintain permanent tension in the South Caucasus and be always ready for new military actions. By the way, the possibility of a new conflict is periodically felt in both countries (It is much more intense in Georgia; in Russia such mood normally prevails in some parts of the oppositional circles). We can also assume that like feelings are experienced by some representatives of the Russian establishment, but they do not reflect mainstream thinking. Russia is facing increased difficulties in the North Caucasus adjacent to Georgia, because of the activity of armed Islamic and fundamentalist groupings. In the situation like this it would be too risky to stake on increased confrontation and tension with Georgia. For this reason, Russia will probably make further efforts to change the attitude of Georgian public and political circles towards itself, even though like attempts have not been very successful so far. It might try to attract partners for future negotiations from the circle of young political leaders, and not from the opposition, only.

*Zurab Abashidze*

## **Russian-Georgian War: 20 Months later**

Eighteen months, i.e. a year and a half has passed since the August 2008 War. It is quite a sufficient period for leaving emotions aside and for making up an inventory in order to find answers to the following questions:

- Who has lost or won? And what was actually lost or won?
- How will things evolve?
- What are the lessons learned from the war?

1. The August War made grave and multiple harms to **Georgia**. Firstly, it had taken lives of many people. This is unrecoverable loss. Lots of IDPs were added to those who fled from Abkhazia, with more than 50 thousand forced to leave Tskhinvali region and Kodori as a result of the ethnic cleansing.

Restoration of territorial unity of the country was postponed for an unclear and vague period. We lost control over the strategically important Kodori Gorge. Significant damage was inflicted on military and economic infrastructure of the country at large. International image of Georgia was seriously damaged producing negative impact on foreign direct investments. Country's accession to **NATO** was hampered or ceased altogether.

We may define the above mentioned as tangible negative aspects of the August War. However, who has ever measured devastating results of such factors as psychological state of the society, lost hopes etc.?

Advantage for Georgia at large and for conflict resolution in particular may have been in the sharp increase of EU involvement in this country. From September 2008, the *EU* Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia has to a certain degree turned the country into a European project. We have been striving to this objective for many years – alas, not at this price, of course.

The August War has considerably accelerated a new wide-scale EU initiative – Eastern Partnership. Thus, Georgia (along with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Armenia) is given a unique chance of a broader cooperation with EU .

The war has also stimulated the signing in January 2009 of the US-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership. This is presumably the most important international document in the modern history of Georgia.

Financial support allocated to Georgia after the War (about 4.5 billion USD) has considerably diminished the destructive impact of the global economic crisis, which led to dramatic outcome in neighboring countries and elsewhere.

*Russia* mainly achieved its objectives as a result of the war. Namely, since the withdrawal of its military bases from Georgia in recent years the Kremlin managed to restore and even strengthen its military presence in the region. In accordance with the agreements signed by Moscow with the Sukhumi and Tskhinvali regimes the Russian troops are again considered to be “legitimately” stationed in these regions. The closest of them is within 40 kilometers from Tbilisi, while another one is in just a few kilometers from the vital highway.

Russia’s military intervention produced serious controversies within NATO regarding Moscow’s policy. This also may be considered as another victory of Kremlin, since the dissonance in the alliance and in the EU remains to be a strategic goal of Moscow. To a certain extent the War shattered Georgia’s image as a stable country. According to Kremlin analysts, it significantly limits Georgia’s perspective for joining NATO and its future energy transit functions.

Though through destructive methods, but Russia still has materialized its geopolitical dream: after August 2008 the world is more receptive of Kremlin’s caprices. Apparently, talks in Moscow about the need of establishing a multi-polar world was not all in vain.

Moscow paid back to the *US* and the West for the recognition of Kosovo, which in Kremlin’s mind destroyed the foundations of European security neglecting Russia’s interests. One can argue about this issue but for an ordinary Georgian it is difficult to understand why should Georgia pay for these geopolitical games.

The August was a clear message to disobedient neighbors and primarily to Ukraine. If they are not clever enough, they will share the same fate!

Russian military action was partially motivated by internal political conjuncture and addressed to the domestic consumers – Russian society/population. The fact remains that the authority of Putin-Medvedev tandem was significantly boosted after the August War.

This was all quite costly to Moscow. Russia actually ended in an international isolation as a result of the war. Recognition of Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence by Russia was supported by such countries as Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru, which is a serious blow to a state with global ambitions.

The military intervention and the following steps made Russia appear in the eyes of the world as an aggressive and revisionist *derzhava*, which is mainly respected for having brutal force and energy resources. Positive appeal of Russia's soft power is utterly low. Not too much to compete in the desired multi-polar world.

The War and declaration of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has added extra instability to such sensitive region, as the North Caucasus. Leaders of these autonomous regions themselves declare that sharp increase of violence in the past year and a half was actually conditioned by August 2008 events. Nevertheless, there are many other reasons of these dramatic developments as well. Violent actions of Russia did not make the CIS countries much obedient to the Kremlin. Currently, Moscow still has tense relations with the majority of its neighboring countries.

Moscow failed to succeed in regime change in Georgia. In the context of future big energy projects Georgia's importance still remains high, similar to the western interest towards our country. It also needs to be noted that one of the reasons of the grave economic crisis in Russia *inter alia* was the Russian-Georgian war.

**US authority** was considerably damaged by the August War. It became apparent that Washington was not able to protect its partner country in the period of such crisis and it failed to extend real support for combating the aggression. It seemed that Russians expressed more ability to protect Ossetians than Americans did to protect Georgia. This feeling was greatly manipulated by Russians. The arrest by Russians of US military Hummers in Poti port had a wide coverage in Russian media.

The August War produced serious doubts within the new members of the **North Atlantic Alliance** from Eastern Europe and Baltics regarding their security guarantees in line with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty – the NATO basic document.

It was quite unusual, that the **EU** acted in a quick and efficient manner during the War and immediately after. This refers to political decisions and their implementation as well. Mr. Sarkozy in his capacity of the President of the EU chairing country, played a very important role in the dramatic days of August, while in September the EU swiftly made an unprecedented decision on deploying the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia.

By next couple of months the EU and the NATO quickly overcame the syndrome of the August aggression and business as usual with Russia was restored. Pessimists believe that the tolerant policy of the West was perceived in Moscow as a green light, thus increasing the possibility of similar developments in future.

Endless debates in the Council of Europe on the August War give another sign of weakness to Moscow. Those discussions failed to identify essential measures to be taken against the aggressor which seriously jeopardize the prestige and future of this highly regarded organization. Georgia's future will greatly depend upon the firm US, NATO and EU policy towards Russia and their uncompromised support of Georgia's sovereignty and its territorial integrity.

For the last 10 years the economic development of *Azerbaijan* has been considerably dependant on the energy transits through Georgia. The August War seriously restricted Baku's capacity for maneuvering with Moscow, thus forcing it to make loyal steps. Efforts by Armenia and Turkey stimulated by the August War and aimed at regulating bilateral relations created a serious dilemma to Azerbaijan.

The war was a painful hit for *Turkey*, as from Ankara's perspective the strengthened military position of Moscow would by all means weaken the Turkish influence in the Southern Caucasus. This might explain the active contacts of Ankara with Moscow immediately after the War and the objectives of the new Platform for the Caucasus, which envisages leading roles for Turkey and Russia in this region.

To a certain extent the restoration of relations with Armenia was a forced step for Turkey, which risks to undermine its strategic partnership with Azerbaijan.

The War was a reminder to *Armenia* that the vital transit corridor though Georgia bears serious risks. The steps of Yerevan on improving bilateral relations with Ankara were motivated by this very fact.

Hence, the "tiny" five day War did really produce tectonic changes.

2. There were several potential scenarios of future developments in Georgia after the August War:

Some experts predicted the regime change in Georgia by political forces loyal to Kremlin. As a result, Georgia would return to the Russian sphere of influence. However, over the past 20 months the Georgian government managed to improve significantly its positions. Strong American and EU support of Georgia's independence and its territorial integrity played a very significant role in that regard. Besides, there is no such pro-Russian political party, which would claim to have any major support of local population.

Since Moscow signed agreements on security with Sokhumi and Tskhinvali regimes, there was a certain expectation in Georgia that the US Government unilaterally would

provide Georgia with security guarantees, similar to the one that Washington has with Israel. Hence, it was assumed that Georgia would be covered by the US security umbrella.

However, President Obama's "reset" of relations with Russia practically excludes such a possibility. It is clear that security cooperation between Georgia and US will develop in the framework of the US-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership which is a very important mechanism by itself.

It seems that for some European partners it would be quite acceptable if Georgia revisits its strategic efforts towards NATO accession, focusing its policy on enhanced relations with the EU within the Eastern Partnership and regional cooperation. Gradual restoration of relations with Russia, primarily of economic ties could be a part of this policy in parallel with the activation of international efforts in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions through the Western support. Such an approach, in view of some Europeans would enable Georgia to win time, focus its resources and partners' support on strengthening its economy and democracy.

Nevertheless, Georgia's foreign policy remains strictly oriented at the full implementation of Sarkozy-Saakashvili-Medvedev Agreement, deoccupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and denunciation of their independence. Official Tbilisi declares that it will restore relations with Russia only if these conditions are met. This strict position and the deadlock are formally caused by the unconditional «нет» of Russian authorities to engage into a dialogue with the Georgian government.

It needs to be noted that the new reality after the Presidential elections in Ukraine will undoubtedly have serious implications on Georgia's foreign policy. Route chosen by the strategic partner of Georgia will be utterly important not only for our country, but also for Russia and Europe.

### 3. What are the lessons learned from the August War?

The security architecture of Europe which was built since the second half of the XX century suffered a destructive blow. In legal terms Europe to a certain extent returned to the epoch, when one could mount a horse, cross a border and claim ownership over a neighboring territory.

New doctrine of President Medvedev – Agreement on European Security, was perceived by many in the World exactly as an attempt to destroy the old security architecture and as an initiative exposing wide ambitions of to-days Russia.

Despite the military aggression of Russia, no new Cold War has been waged and this is another important lesson for Georgia. As one European sarcastically noted, NATO and Europe were not prepared to protect with arms Stalin's home town Gori from Russia invasion.

Presumably, we may also deduce from the August War, that the change of strategic orientation and NATO membership for the country in our region may only be the result of a long-term and well calculated process. Galloping towards this end is a very risky venture.

Even the full fledged NATO security club members are not completely protected from external threats. Hence, some European countries made the following conclusion: there are no alternatives to having a permanent dialogue with neighbors, especially with big and dangerous states.

Let me reiterate that despite the strong critical reaction of the international community to Russian violence against Georgia the West and Russia maintain close relations. This process is clearly underway.

Thus, Georgia should not wage a Cold War with Russia just on its own. We should no more engage in a life-or-death struggle with Kremlin. It is a small country's duty to make sure that it is not trapped into a devastating confrontation and to find common language with its opponents. Anything can be discussed except freedom and territorial integrity. Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili once compared Russia to a huge stone, which hangs on Georgia. We should avoid to be pressed by this stone.

One more lesson which we had to learn after the drama in Abkhazia: It is more difficult to win peace than war. Thus the path to lost territories go through the peace process. There is no other way! That's why our US partners advice us to keep "strategic patience".

Ultimately, it really up to the strategic vision, solidarity and courage of the West to stop Russian ambitions for zones of influence and buffer zones in neighboring countries.

At the same time, the most efficient instrument and mechanism of self-protection for a small country is the degree of its democracy. Vaclav Havel defined this concept as "the power of the powerless". Democracy and well-being of its people give the moral advantage to a small country. It is rather difficult to oppress such a country in XXI century. Thus, only democracy and economic development will lead Georgia to the restoration of its territorial integrity.

Nevertheless, political stability is of the same high importance. Democratic changes should be made only through maintaining stability in the country. New revolution will lead us to the loss of statehood.

Our way to Europe goes through democratic reforms, sustained economic development and realistic foreign policy.

*Alla Yazkova, Ivlian Haindrava*

## **The Tagliavini Report: ‘To each his own?’**

*The public discussion of the Tagliavini report took place in Berlin, November 2009. The discussion, initiated by Heinrich Böll Foundation and the parliamentary faction of the Green Party, attracted a large audience. Along with the individual aspects of the Mission’s report, presentations and the follow up discussion touched upon broader issues concerning the resolution of conflicts threatening security in Europe. Several months later, after receiving the ICCN’s proposal to write articles for the Georgian-Russian volume, Georgian and Russian co-reporters from the Berlin discussion, simultaneously decided to become the co-authors of the paper. We do hope that our joint ‘variations’ on the theme of the Tagliavini Mission report are still topical today.*

The EC summit of December 2008 established the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG)<sup>1</sup>. The Mission was entrusted with the responsibility to investigate the causes and consequences of the five-day war in 2008. The Head of the Mission, Swiss Diplomat Heidi Tagliavini, is a former Head of the UN Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG). 20 experts from European countries were involved in the Mission’s activity. The Supervisory Board included experts on inter-

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1 Hereinafter referred to as ‘Tagliavini Mission’ or ‘Mission’

national law, four former foreign and defense ministers, and a former President of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Mission's headquarters were based in Geneva and its branch offices – in Brussels and Tbilisi. For quite a short period (less than one year) the Mission managed to collect numerous facts on the preconditions, immediate reasons and circumstances of the August conflict. To identify them, the experts of the Mission studied a large number of documents and publications, held a number of meetings and consultations. On September 30, 2009, the resulting report was submitted to the Council of the European Union, the OSCE and the UN. It contained over 1000 pages and was released in three volumes. In the present article we depart from the structure of the given report and offer a more convenient scheme for the purpose of our analysis.

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The evaluations and facts contained in the report are by all means interesting for understanding the European vision of the reasons for a gradual escalation of confrontation between Russia and Georgia. These facts belong to different periods – perestroika, dismembering of the USSR and the formation of new independent states. At that stage Russia was mechanically perceived as a political center, attractive for some new states, who felt the necessity of joint actions to stabilize the post-Soviet space. Many western politicians thought the same. They feared that without Russia's organizing role economic and social chaos would occur in the post-Soviet space, and, for this reason, welcomed the formation of the CIS.<sup>2</sup> Georgia, which was torn by civil confrontation, turned out to be an outsider at this crucial moment. Especially after the tragic events on April 9, 1989, 'much of the political class as well as public opinion in Georgia took a sharp pro-Western turn' (Mission Report; Volume 2; page 13).<sup>3</sup> As noted in the report, a rise of nationalism was observed during Gamsakhurdia's leadership. It resulted in the alienation of two territorial subjects – Russia supported Abkhazia and South Ossetia 'from the Georgian independence project.' (Ibid)

The report contains the chronological account of the events preceding the August conflict and presents their comparison against the norms of the international law. However, the analysis of the sources and reasons of the conflict starting from the late 1980s is quite sketchy. In this section, the authors basically focus on the mistakes

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2 Olcott M.B., Aslund A., Garnett Sh.W. Getting it Wrong. Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Washington, 1999, p.2.

3 Here and in the rest of the text we refer to the corresponding pages of the primary source – the English version of the Report. We think that given the 1.6 mln EURO budget, the Mission could have provided an official translation of the Report into the Russian and Georgian languages (Authors' comment )

made by the Georgian government, although, in the mid-1990s, E. Shevardnadze made several attempts to improve Georgia-Russia relations. This was very much resisted by some Russian politicians. Their resistance was manifested in the State Duma's refusal to ratify the Russia-Georgia framework agreement signed in February 1994, which was three times submitted for ratification by the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (1994-1996). These and other facts are reflected in official Russian publications; there are also witnesses to these events, but as it says in the Mission's report, out of the 19 trips made by the mission, only 3 short-term visits were made to Moscow and the Mission did not have enough time for unofficial meetings. Inadequate attention was given to the Russian documents and publications available on the Internet. Due to this, a broad historical section in the second volume of this report looks sketchy and somewhat superficial.

After the year 2000, Georgia - Russia relations dramatically deteriorated and the American factor started to become increasingly prominent in the South Caucasus. Georgia became the most active recipient of American aid. American military programs were introduced into the country. There were reportedly more than a hundred US military advisers in the Georgian armed forces when the conflict erupted in August 2008, and an even larger number of US specialists and advisors are thought to have been active in different branches of the Georgian power structures and administration (Volume 1. Page 15). The same years also saw a larger involvement of the EU into Georgia. However, the EU was reluctant to involve itself in joint military programs and cooperation in the security sphere. The authors of the given report think that their 'cautious' approach was reflected in the decision of the Bucharest NATO summit of April 2008, to take a positive line on Georgia's request to become a NATO member, but to abstain from the steps leading immediately to its admission (Volume I. Page 17). It has to be noted that this kind of 'compromise' decision led to a further deterioration of Georgia - Russia relations.

The report gives the evaluation of the problems linked with Georgia's relations with the 'rebellious provinces' of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which is crucial for the understanding of the causes and consequences of the August armed conflict. However, this kind of evaluation can be hardly considered comprehensive. Large sections of the report are devoted to the history of these regions starting from the XIX century as well as to the theoretical possibility of their federalization. However, the report does not adequately cover the 1990s and further missed opportunities to reach agreement. For example, in 1997, the Georgian and Abkhazian sides were close to signing a document actually implying the formation of a common state. This process was mediated by Yevgeny Primakov, who was the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation in

the corresponding period.<sup>4</sup> In the same period, the contours of South Ossetia's status within the Georgian federation were clearly shaped.<sup>5</sup> It is also known that S. Bagapsh, President of Abkhazia, showed his readiness to meet M. Saakashvili in March 2005 to hold negotiations on the future of Abkhazia. However, his initiative was not supported by the Georgian side. Literally on the eve of war, i.e. in May 2008, I. Alasania, a former Head of the Georgian Mission to the UN, arrived in Sukhumi. It looked as if the parties reached a common understanding on the main principles of the Agreement concerning the non-commencement of military actions and the non-use of force or the threat to use force in bilateral relations. However, this document was not signed either. The Tagliavini Mission could have given more attention to the investigation of the relevant reasons as well as to the evaluation of the Georgian government's attempt to solve the South Ossetian problem through the use of force in 2004.

The Mission's main observations and conclusions directly concerning the period of war and the post - war period can be grouped into several categories, which has been attempted below. This classification is of an arbitrary character and the categories overlap each other to a certain extent. Some of the Mission's observations and conclusions are accompanied by our comments.

### **The first group of facts (The facts concerning Georgia)**

*1. Georgian claims of a large-scale presence of Russian armed forces in South Ossetia prior to the Georgian offensive on 7/8 August could not be substantiated by the Mission (Volume 1; page 23).*

It has to be noted that on August 9, 2008, the President of Georgia issued a decree on a state of war and full mobilization on the entire territory of Georgia. The named decree was approved by the country's Parliament, in compliance with the Constitution, in the evening of August 9<sup>th</sup>. The decree says that Russian military forces and military equipment entered the territory of Georgia on **August 8** via the Roki tunnel. It also mentions the repetitive violation of the Georgian air space by Russian air force also from August 8. It is surprising that the Mission has neglected this most important source, since the document implies that 'Georgian claims of a large-scale presence of Russian armed forces in South Ossetia prior to the Georgian offensive on 7/8 August' contradict the information on the basis of which the President and the Parliament of Georgia declared a state of war on the territory of Georgia.

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4 «Диалоговый процесс по гарантиям безопасности в контексте грузино-абхазского конфликта», International Alert, [www.international-alert.org](http://www.international-alert.org) 2009 г. стр.11 Dialogue on Security Guarantees in the Context of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict, September 2009, International Alert, p.10

5 Л.Чибиров: «О времени, о людях, о себе», Владикавказ, 2004 г.

*2. The use of force by Georgia in South Ossetia is not justifiable under international law (Volume 1; Page 22).*

Without going into the debates about the controversies in the norms of international law, we can just state that in this context it would be more relevant to speak about the inadmissibility of the ‘disproportionate use of force’ by Georgia, which was definitely the case.

*3. The use of force against Russian peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia is not justifiable (Volume1, Page 23).*

Here we see a contradiction with the Mission’s statements in Volume 2, Page 327, where it says that the Mission was unable to establish whether, Russian peacekeepers had lost their status (and, consequently, immunity) due to the fact that by the time of Georgians’ attack they had already taken part in military actions. But if the attack on Tskhinvali started at night, August 7/8, in which military actions did the peacekeepers participate before that?

*4. During the conflict in August 2008, the Mission did not find any factual evidence of genocide committed by the Georgian side (Volume 1. pages .17, .21, .26-27).*

This conclusion has been substantiated both factually and politically. Genocide of the Ossetian population could not be Saakashvili’s intention because he had already planned to form an alternative administration - pro-Georgian Ossetian administration headed by D. Sanakoev, and its legitimization would require the existence of living rather than dead Ossetians. Also, differently from the early 1990s, when armed clashes in South Ossetia were accompanied by the persecution of people of Ossetian nationality throughout Georgia, the cases like these were not observed neither before nor during or after the August war.

### **The second group of facts (The facts concerning Russia)**

*5. If the Russian peacekeepers were attacked, Russia had the right to defend them using military means. Hence, the Russian use of force for defensive purposes during the first phase of the conflict would be legal (Volume1; Page 23).*

The comment on Statement 3 in the first group of facts also applies to this statement.

*6. Later, the Russian military action went far beyond the reasonable limits of defense which is proved by the Russian military’s subsequent actions on the Georgian territory. Based on this, the authors conclude that during the subsequent actions Russia violated international law (Volume1; Page 24).*

*The Russian and South Ossetian forces reportedly continued their advances for some days after the August ceasefire was declared (‘Sarkozy plan’) and occupied*

*additional territories (Volume 1; Page 22).*

During the battles air strikes were launched on naval and land military bases of Georgian army. Military airports were bombed in Gori, Vaziani, Poti, and Senaki. In addition, residential areas were reportedly destroyed. On August 12, the military base in Gori was bombed with *Iskander* rockets. According to Human Rights Watch, a Dutch television cameraman was killed as a result of these military operations. Also dozens of citizens were killed and wounded. Apart from this, ‘volunteers’ from the North Caucasian republics took part in the armed clashes. On August the 9<sup>th</sup>, the *Vostok* battalion, led by Chechen field commander Sulim Yamadayev, also got involved in military actions.

*7. There are confirmed cases of ill-treatment and torture against combatants detained. Such acts seem to have been committed mainly by South Ossetian forces, in some cases possibly with Russian soldiers present (Volume 2. page 361).*

*8. Not did only Russian forces prevent the looting of ethnic Georgian houses by different Ossetian forces, but were, sometimes, also involved in these activities (Volume 2, page 365). Neither did they intervene to prevent arson against ethnic Georgians’ homes (Volume 2; page .370).*

According to the human rights center *Memorial*, the Russian military that entered South Ossetian territory, as well as Gori and Kareli districts, did not ensure the security of the population in the Georgian villages, on the territories under their control. For example, in the ‘buffer zone’ (i.e. outside South Ossetia territories) South Ossetian subdivisions actually annihilated Georgian village Ergneti and burnt down over two thirds of houses. Also, the so – called ‘volunteers’ from the North Caucasian republics drove away cars and pillage without any difficulty. It became possible to reduce the level of crime only after the 15 August negotiations between Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II and the representatives of the Russian Ministry of Defense.<sup>6</sup>

### **The third group of facts (South Ossetian component)**

*9. The Ossetian party’s responses to a number of questions related to Humanitarian Law and Human rights are missing from the Report. The Mission provided the Ossetian side with a list of questions (See Volume 3, pages 525-526) which remained unanswered. (It has to be mentioned that the Abkhazian side gave answers to the corresponding questions.) The Report contains the evaluations of the South Ossetian side’s actions that are given below.*

*10. South Ossetian irregular military formations often violated International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law, that would not or could not be controlled*

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6 Буферная зона. Неправительственный доклад // Новая газета, 17.11.2008

by regular Russian armed forces (Volume 1; page 10).

11. It follows from the illegal character of the Georgian military assault that South Ossetian defensive action in response did conform to international law in terms of legitimate self-defence. However, any operations of South Ossetian forces outside of the purpose of repelling the Georgian armed attack, in particular acts perpetrated against ethnic Georgians inside and outside South Ossetia, must be considered as having violated International Humanitarian Law and in many cases also Human Rights Law (Volume 1 . Page 23).

12. Several elements suggest the conclusion that ethnic cleansing was indeed practiced against ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia (Volume1 Page .27), both during and after the conflict (Volume 2; Page 394). During and after the conflict a widespread campaign of looting took place against ethnic Georgian houses and properties. Ossetian forces, unidentified armed Ossetians, and even Ossetian civilians participated in this campaign (Volume 2; page 365). A systematic campaign of arson was undertaken against homes and other civilian buildings (Volume 2; page 370).

13. There is credible evidence of cases of summary executions carried out by South Ossetian forces (Volume 2; page 355). There are confirmed cases of ill-treatment and torture committed by South Ossetian forces (Volume 2; page 359).

In our opinion, all these observations taken together, suggest the consistent, organized and consolidated actions of the Ossetian side, aimed at the displacement of ethnic Georgians from South Ossetia (which can be identified as *ethnic cleansing*). If we consider the given observations in combination with those entered in the previous block, we get a picture of planned, controlled and purposeful action.

#### **The fourth group of facts (Abkhazian component)**

14. Abkhaz forces supported by Russian forces took the upper Kodori Valley (Volume1; Page 11), which was met with little Georgian resistance. This attack implied the illegal use of force and is considered a violation of international law by both Abkhazian and Russian sides (Volume1; Page 2).

#### **The fifth group of facts (Abkhazian- South Ossetian - Russian)**

15. South Ossetia and Abkhazia did not have a right to secede from Georgia (Volume1; Page 17).

16. Recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is contrary to international law (Ibid).

The Russian Federation's official position is diametrically contrary to this. The

announcements of the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation made on August 6 and 25, 2009, refer to ‘new military, political and legislative realities’, and the possibility of ‘independent existence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia’<sup>7</sup>.

However, discussion of this topic goes beyond the analysis of the Tagliavini Mission Report.

*17. It needs to be stressed that both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, together with Russia, must take appropriate measures to ensure that IDPs/refugees, including those from the conflicts of the early 1990s, are able to return to their homes with no conditions imposed other than those laid down in relevant international standards, and that Georgia must respect the principle of return based on free individual decisions by the displaced persons (Volume 1; Pages 27 - 28).*

The given conclusion contains potentially far-reaching practical consequences, even though the experience accumulated in relation to these and other international conflicts points to great difficulties arising in the course of the solution of this problem.

### **The sixth group of facts (The facts concerning Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian parties )**

*18. There are some indications that Georgia used GRAD and cluster munitions when attacking Tskhinvali. There are also some indications and consequently concerns regarding Russian use of cluster munitions in military attacks on Gori and possibly elsewhere (Volume 1. Page 28; Volume 2. Pages 434, 435, 350).*

*19. During the August 2008 conflict and weeks after the ceasefire most of the violations of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights were committed, by all sides, in South Ossetia and in the adjacent so-called buffer zone. Numerous violations were committed by South Ossetian irregular armed formations, volunteers and mercenaries (Volume 1. Page 26). Russian forces failed to prevent and stop violations by South Ossetian forces, armed irregular groups and armed individuals before and after the ceasefire in South Ossetia and the adjacent territories (Volume 1. Page 27).*

*20. There is no way to assign overall responsibility for the conflict to one side alone. Each one is responsible for what has happened (Volume 1. Page 32).*

The Mission’s like observations (Volume 2 is abundant with them) must have, in principle, far-reaching consequences, which are not only political or political-legal, but also **criminal-legal** when applied to specific individuals. This is because we are actually talking about the crimes that turned hundreds of peaceful citizens into victims. Unfortunately, we can hardly expect that the individuals responsible for these crimes

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7 www.mid.ru 1231-06-08-2009, 1269-25-08-2009

(both who gave criminal orders and who executed them) will find themselves in the dock either in their own country or in front of the international tribunal.

### **The seventh group of facts (results of the observations that more or less concern the EU)**

21. *As already noted in the first paragraph of the document this is the first time that after having reached the ceasefire agreement the European Union set up a Fact-Finding Mission as a political and diplomatic follow-up to the conflict. It is stressed that the Fact-Finding Mission is strictly limited to establishing facts and is not a tribunal (Volume 1. Page 2).*

22. *The threat and use of force have now returned to European politics. Established principles of international law such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of states were ignored... Falling back from civilised standards of political interaction in Europe is a consequence (Volume 1. Page 32).*

23. *... there had been no adequate reaction by the international community which would have been both timely and vigorous enough to contain the continuing build-up of tensions and the increasing threat of armed conflict. Regardless of the belated international diplomatic efforts, the crisis had an almost free run (Volume 1. Page 33).*

24. *... the international community is among the losers, too (Volume 1. Page 32).*

It can be said in relation to this block of the Mission's observations that the report speaks, in general terms, about the responsibility of the international community which failed to prevent the conflict between Russia and Georgia (however, the report does not make any concrete proposals), although it was quite clear that each side was getting ready for war in the years preceding the conflict (Volume 1. Pages 14-15, 20, 30). A. Illarionov's investigation «Как готовилась война», describing, in detail, Russia's preparations for the war, was published during the Tagliavini Mission's activity.<sup>□</sup> Unfortunately, there is no Georgian study of the kind focusing on this issue. However, the Club of Independent Experts presented interesting material concerning different aspects of the August 2008 events.<sup>8</sup> It is enough to look at the last years' figures, like the dynamics of the government spending on defense and the number of personnel in Georgian military forces, think about the objectives of the training and retraining program for reservists as well as of the young patriots' camps and listen to the Georgian authorities' militarist rhetoric (Volume 1. Page 14) to understand how the things would develop. OSCE observers were based in the epicenter of pending military actions. On the threshold of the eruption of war they seemed to inform their commanders about the concentration of armies and military equipment on both

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8 Новая газета <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2009/066/17.html>

sides of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone. Finally, is it possible not to notice the concentration of armored equipment given the 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies of secret services (See, for example Volume 1; page 19)? Why did N. Sarkozy's shuttle trips along the Paris-Moscow-Tbilisi route took place on August 12 rather than August 2, that is after but not before the military conflict? In short, both EU and US managed to footle away this war.

Also, not to mislead the reader or not make him/her think that the authors of this article put responsibility on those who are not actually supposed to be responsible, we would like to state that, on the whole, it is difficult not to agree with one of the main conclusions contained in the report: The armed conflict between Georgia and Russia is a result of mutual accusations, provocations, military and political threats and the acts of violence accumulated for a number of years within the conflict zone and also beyond its borders. There are no strategic winners in this war. For this reason it is necessary to continue analyzing its real reasons, clearly determine and voice the share of responsibility lying with each side to this conflict as well as with the international community.

By the way, the western mass media presented more concrete opinions following these hot events. According to the evaluation of the London newspaper *Financial Times* (13.08.2008) the Georgian side overestimated the possibility of receiving support to its own actions from the West. Saakashvili might have been under the illusion that if he started war with Russia and was defeated in that war, the US would help him. However, according to the same source (*Financial Times* 10.08.2008), military confrontation with Russia was not even discussed by the US, or their allies in NATO. A recently published book (R. Asmus 'A Little War that Changed the World'), that came out after the publication of the Tagliavini Mission report, somewhat clarifies the above circumstances.

Leading western analysts share the opinion that the war between Georgia and Russia has faced the West, and, first of all, the US, with a number of moral and geo-strategic challenges. The moral dimension is quite obvious. As for geo-strategy, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski 'An independent Georgia is critical to the international flow of oil.'<sup>9</sup> Russian experts also pointed to the energy related reason of the Georgia – Russia conflict: By using violent methods and demonstrating the potential of their use, it was attempted to reduce the possibility of transporting energy resources through the territory of Georgia<sup>10</sup>. S. Minasyan (Caucasus Institute, Yerevan) says that 'One of the main results of the August 2008 armed conflict is that significantly increased risk

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9 'Crisis in Georgia, 2008: Preconditions, Reality Perspectives.' Funded with support from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Tbilisi (In Georgian and English languages)

10 "Time", August 14, 2008

is now related to the transit systems and energy corridors running across Georgia.’<sup>11</sup>

A special section of the Tagliavini report is dedicated to the energy problems of the region. However, in our opinion, there are not enough concrete facts and evaluations presented in relation to the 2008 conflict.

On the whole, it is quite understandable why the West is much more concerned about Russia’s actions than about the actions of Georgia. The Georgian authorities mainly create problems for themselves, their people and country (which is not justifiable, of course), whereas Russia’s actions shatter the fragile system of international security and create an extremely dangerous precedent. Georgia could do and actually did something crazy, but she could not start *war* against Russia within the limits of its own universally recognized borders. At the same time, according to Otto Luchterhand, a well-known expert in the sphere of international law and order in Eastern Europe (Hamburg University), by attacking South Ossetia Georgia violated its agreed responsibility assumed in 1992/1996, which do not allow the use of force; it also violated the ‘important norms and prohibitions of international humanitarian and military law’, which, in the first place, prohibit attacks on peaceful population and civil objects as well as on ‘unprotected populated areas.’<sup>12</sup>

Official Moscow’s reaction to the outcomes of the Tagliavini Mission’s activity was quite predictable. In its comments as of September 30 (the date of the official publication of the given Report) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation emphasized ‘the main conclusion, according to which aggression against South Ossetia was initiated by the present government of Georgia on August 8, 2008.’ It also said in the comments that ‘the report contains a number of ambiguities. The section of the report allegedly referring to the disproportionate use of force by the Russian side raises most questions.’<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, the Mission’s same conclusion about the mass bombing of Tskhinvali by Georgian artillery and the use of volley fire that triggered military actions and mass invasion of Georgian territory by Russian troops was quite predictably neglected by Georgian officials who emphasized the ‘disproportionate use of force by the Russian side.’ This gave grounds to the Georgian opposition’s claims that the authorities tried to conceal the truth from people. Moreover, even before the publication of the Report, Georgian officials took preventive measures and, to undermine trust, accused some of the Mission’s staff of being biased (this, in particular applies to O. Luchterhand quoted above), and spread rumors about two other members of the

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11 Современная Европа. Москва, Институт Европы РАН. 2009, №4, с. 30

12 С.Минасян: Кавказ после пятидневной войны. – <http://www.newsarmenia.ru/analitics/29.09.2008>

13 О. Лухтерхандт. Международно-правовые аспекты грузинской войны (2008), с.2.

Mission that they were paid by Gazprom. It seems that the authorities in Tbilisi were apprehensive about the content of the Report: It was expected it to be more negative than it really was.

On the whole, the Report says that the Georgians describe the military actions between Russia and Georgia as an ‘aggression’, whereas the Russians - as a ‘peace enforcement operation’ (Volume 1; page 22), that is in a totally contrary way. The Report also emphasizes that the international community ‘was reluctant to enter into any formal qualifications.’ However, both versions have their supporters - ‘Georgian’ (supported by more people) and ‘Russian’ (supported by fewer people).

Reaction of both sides once again confirmed one of the main conclusions made by the Mission: ‘There can be no peace in the South Caucasus as long as a common understanding of the facts is not achieved.’ In this relation it is difficult not to notice the following: The Report contains a number of statements that could be used by Georgian and Russian sides as a basis for arriving at a ‘common understanding of the facts’ even at the level of independent experts at the beginning of this initiative. Most part of like facts and conclusions is contained in the first volume of the Tagliavini Mission report. It also refers to international legal documents including the articles of UN Charter which must be complied with.

The Russian public showed a vivid interest in the conclusions made by the European Union’s first fact - finding mission, which can be demonstrated by the discussions held in a number of expert and research centers upon their publication. Immediately after the presentation of the Report on October 5, 2009, it was discussed at the Information – Analytical Center for the Study of Political Processes in Post-Soviet Space (Moscow State University). Numerous participants made different and, sometimes, controversial evaluations of the August 2008 events. The majority of attendees shared the opinion that the Mission’s conclusions were ‘uncomfortable for all the parties’, and not only for Russia, Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but also for western countries. As emphasized by Tagliavini in the article published in *New York Times* (01.10.2009), the conflict of 2008 was quite predictable and could have been prevented. However, this has not been done. Differently from many other speakers, Alan Tskhurbaev, an Independent expert from Ossetia, noted that the Report reflected reality. ‘...Its main merit is that it is not politicized. As for the controversy in evaluations, it just proves an impartial character of the document.’<sup>14</sup>

To illustrate the Georgian public’s attitude to the Tagliavini Report, we provide below some conclusions of the survey conducted with Tbilisi and Batumi population from October 30 to November 6, 2009.<sup>15</sup>

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14 Комментарий МИД России №1431-30-09-2009 //www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/161334

15 <http://www.ia-centr.ru>. 05.10.2009. Эксперты о докладе Тальявини.

*1. Do you think that the Georgian and Russian authorities are jointly responsible for waging the war and its consequences?*

	Tbilisi	Batumi
Yes	61,1%	37,3%
No	29,7%	46,2%
Difficult to answer	9,2%	16,5%

*2. To what extent do you trust the Tagliavini Mission's observations and conclusions?*

Absolutely	10,5%	20,0%
'Yes' rather than 'No'	21,9%	23,5%
'No' rather than 'Yes'	17,1%	9,5%
Don't trust at all	12,9%	8,2%
Difficult to answer	37,6%	38,7%

*3. In what way did Georgia's international prestige change after the publication of the Report?*

Increased	11,4%	19,1%
Remained the same	39,1%	34,4%
Decreased	14,5%	8,8%
Difficult to answer	35,0%	37,7%

A striking result is that over 60% of Tbilisi respondents believe that the Georgian authorities together with the Russian government are responsible for waging the war and its consequences, whereas the identical opinion is held by less than 40% of Batumi population. However, this result is not difficult to explain: The authorities subjected Georgian population to powerful propaganda, but the provinces turned out to be more sensitive to its influence than the capital city. The residents of the capital can, at least, use other sources of information, which is rarely the case in the province. Overoptimistic responses to the 3<sup>rd</sup> question have to be also emphasized. In this case, the responses of Tbilisi and Batumi population show much smaller difference. The image of Georgia has been greatly damaged together with Saakashvili's image. During the year and a half following the war, the Georgian President did not receive even a single (!) invitation for an official visit to western countries. At the same time, Georgia still received from the West some 4. 5 billion dollars for post-war rehabilitations.

As for the consequences of the war in terms of the West's attitude to Russia (we are not going to discuss the moral dimension here), already in November 2009, Fernando Valenzuela, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to the Russian

Federation, made quite a frank statement: ‘The war has definitely influenced our relations. It would be unfair to say that these events did not entail any consequences. I would not say that our controversies have been overcome, but I think that the past war is no longer an obstacle that can largely deteriorate our relations with the Russian Federation. Now our relations are normal again. This means we have quite a good common understanding in certain aspects, in some others not’. And further on, ‘The EU, of course, believes that the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia should not have been recognized. But let us stop here; let diplomats in Geneva try to reach an agreement.’<sup>16</sup> With Obama’s ‘reset’ also taken into consideration, we could speak about the restoration of the following formula: ‘Business as usual.’ It seems that the publication of the Tagliavini report is an ascertainment of the post-war status quo, rather than a starting point for a new western policy towards the participants of the August 2008 conflict.

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Finally, we would like to note that the comprehensive and complex work conducted by Tagliavini Mission is not yet able to move out of the deadlock the solution of a number of topical issues. The conflict between Russia and Georgia has not been resolved, a robust peacemaking mechanism for the prevention of armed clashes has not been created, and, finally, we have not received an answer to the question whether all the parties to the conflict have learned lessons from this experience. It says in the concluding section of the Report that the Helsinki political culture, which has been created since the early 1970s, has significantly suffered as a result of the conflict and that the use of violent means has returned to European policy, also for the solution of territorial problems.

The Report does not answer many questions (and, may be, it is not supposed to), but it definitely says that this kind of work has to be continued since it is the only way to bring closer the time of constructive solutions.

*Alexandre Kukhianidze*

## **On the Russia-Georgia Conflict**

### **Introduction**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Georgia underwent dramatic political, economic and military changes. Civil conflicts and permanent tension with Russia finally resulted in the Georgia-Russia war of August 2008. The weakness of Georgian state institutions, lack of democracy, Russia's support to separatism and terrorism on Georgia's territories that resulted in Georgia's western orientation and its attempts to join the Euro-Atlantic structures, the existence of Caspian and Central Asian energy resources and transport corridor in the South Caucasus as well as the West's strategic interests in the region caused the confrontation of Georgia's and Russia's interests. Georgia, which had not yet developed into a modern nation-state, found itself squeezed between big states' interests; the factors operating in external policy deeply interlinked with internal policy problems.

Although criminalization, smuggling and corruption flourished in the entire post-Soviet space, they were especially detrimental for Georgia of the 1990s. Georgia was often called a failed state in the 1990s, and even though it is no longer labeled like this in 2010, it still does not have control over its territories. As for the supremacy of the law, human rights and public goods, they are not yet adequately guaranteed. Georgia is not a strong state, as strong states have full control over their territories and fully

guarantee all the above values for their citizens. And yet, despite a number of factors impeding the formation of the Georgian state (out of which the Russian factor is of primary importance), democratic institutes have started to form in the country during the last decade. Georgia has started to realize its national interests and the country's development has become more sustainable.

### **A brief history of Georgia-Russia relations**

In 1783, two Orthodox Christian countries - Georgia and Russia, concluded the Treaty of Georgievsk. According to this treaty Russia was responsible to protect Georgia in case of war. However, Russia violated the treaty, annexed Georgia in 1801 and made Georgia into the Tiflis and Kutaisi *gubernias*. Georgia, which stopped existing as a state, managed to regain independence only in 1918, after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. That time Georgian Mensheviks won the democratic elections. It was the first time in the history of the European social-democratic movement that social democrats came to power. The Soviet Russia recognized Georgia's independence. However, this democratic experiment was terminated on February 25, 1921, as a result of Russian Bolsheviks' invasion. After bloody battles, the Georgian government had to immigrate to Paris, and the country remained under Soviet occupation for seven decades.

The formation of the USSR in the period of ethnically Georgian J. Stalin developed among the Georgians dual standards in relation to the state and the Kremlin's hegemony. On the one hand, the Soviet Russian state caused a feeling of alienation; on the other hand, the small and not very well known Georgian nation was proud of being the fatherland of the 'great' world leader, 'the father of peoples.' After the Soviet Army opened fire upon the Georgian students' in Tbilisi (March 1956) who protested against Nikita Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin's cult in his speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party, the Georgians developed a latent feeling of alienation from the Russian and Soviet State.<sup>1</sup>

The first symptoms of alienation appeared in the 1960s, during the Soviet liberalization period. They were manifested in rapidly growing corruption, misappropriations and illegal enterprises. In the 1970s and 1980s, they involved all the levels of Georgian public life and mostly the ruling party and Soviet nomenclature along with the so-called 'red directors' in state enterprises. Under Brezhnev's governance, the dual standards concealed during Stalin's period developed into a life style also for the Russian nomenclature. However, differently from the latter, corrupt practice was somewhat particular in Georgia. Its relative freedom represented a specific, though not always a conscious form of independence for the local elites, who perceived Russia

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1 Interview with the witnesses of the massacre following students' demonstration on March 9, 1956, in Tbilisi.

as a milk cow to pump billions of rubles out. As time passed these elites became more skilful and experienced in misappropriating money from the State budget. In his book *The Russians*, American journalist Hedrick Smith, who worked in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, gave a brilliant description of shadow economy and flourishing corruption in the USSR, and, particularly, in Georgia.<sup>2</sup>

Corruption had become such a serious problem by 1972, that Leonid Brezhnev had to replace Vasil Mzhavanadze, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, with Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Foreign Minister of Georgia, whose primary task was to fight so called ‘negative phenomena’. That time, the term ‘negative phenomena’ covered not only crime, corruption, illegal business or the misappropriation of state property, but also the so-called bourgeois remains in people’s behavior and consciousness, or anything that was inconsistent with the Soviet lifestyle. Thousands of people found themselves in jail, but this only increased the charge for the provision of illegal services due to increased risk. All the above events were rooted in the Soviet system, which could only control crime and corruption using exceptionally repressive, Stalin methods. In the 1970s, Shevardnadze had no other choice left due to full control exercised by the Kremlin.

Mikhail Gorbachev’s attempts to reform the Soviet system through political democratization and economic liberalization resulted in its total collapse. It could be argued whether this was caused by Gorbachev’s policy or because it was in principle impossible to reform the Soviet model. Anyway, it was only after the dissolution of the USSR that Georgia had an opportunity to build a modern nation-state within the borders recognized by the international community, albeit contested by separatists and Russia.<sup>3</sup>

## **Georgia after the Soviet collapse (1991-2003)**

### *The coup d’etat against President Gamsakhurdia and the ‘Moscow’s Hand’*

When Georgian constituents voted for a presidential candidate, former dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia in 1991, they naively assumed that it was enough to release oneself from the yoke of communism, to start a happy Western life. But soon after the elections the situation in the country became totally contrary to their expectations. It brought mass unemployment, unexpected poverty and the marginalization of the vast majority of population. The Soviet collapse brought both political and economic catastrophes in the situation of growing destabilization, chaos, nationalism, and

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2 Hedrick Smith. (1976). *The Russians*. Published by Times Books.

3 ‘Contested Borders in the Caucasus’, By Bruno Coppieters (Ed.). From: <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/>

interethnic controversies regarding the future arrangements on post-Soviet territories. In Georgia, a country densely populated with ethnic minorities, the above tendencies were especially prominent. The dissolution of state structures and the demoralization of the law-enforcement system, illegal proliferation of the Soviet Army's weapons and the outbreak of armed ethnic conflicts created all the necessary conditions for a wide-scale criminalization in the country.

Gamsakhurdia's attempts to establish a new authoritarian regime were very much resisted by the opposition and resulted in the Tbilisi civil war in December 1991 – January 1992. More than hundred people died during the two-week war and criminalization started too intensely and openly grows in Georgia. Both confronting parties addressed the Georgian public and provided weapons to their supporters. Many people received weapons and disappeared. Tbilisi and the regions of Georgia were swept over by an unbelievably powerful wave of gangsterism and armed burglary in no time. The gangs robbed families, busses with passengers, organizations, banks, and businessmen, seized cars from their owners during the day time and in centrally located areas. The former Soviet citizens, and now marginalized groups of people, that were trying to survive as hard as they could, stole the equipment and materials from idle, 'no one's' mills and factories, trying to sell it for very little money as scrap metal, that could be exported abroad, mainly to Turkey. One hour before twilight, the streets in Georgian towns became deserted. The capital subway worked until 5 -6 p.m. instead of 0.30 a.m. Because weapons were very much in demand, Russian military servants and Georgian policemen turned out to be victims of numerous attacks. But most often, semi-military and semi-criminal Georgian groups got involved in criminal collusion with Russian officers and bought weapons from them. During several weeks the gangs grew up to the size of small armies and equipped themselves with modern Soviet weapons, like machine guns, pistols, grenades, antitank grenade cup discharges and even armored troop carriers. The Georgian police, that was equipped with pistols only, turned out to be totally helpless; so, it just disappeared. Therefore, population's security was left to the mercy of fate. It became extremely dangerous to move between cities.

Differently from purely criminal groupings, semi-military formations were set up to carry out assignments of different political groups, proclaiming fight for independence. Jaba Ioseliani set up the militarized formation *Mkhedrioni* and Tengiz Kitovani had his own Georgian *Guards*. Both of them were the organizers of the military coup d'état against President Gamsakhurdia, which was supported by the Russian military,<sup>4</sup> and led Georgia into total chaos. Along with other semi-military formations, that called themselves *fraternities*, the Armenian settlements in the South of the country

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4 During Tbilisi war the Transcaucasus Military District headquarters handed over to Tengiz Kitovani armored equipment, which determined the outcome of the military coup against legitimately elected Georgian president Zviad Gasmakhurdia.

set up military troops. In parallel, the Abkhaz in the North – West and the Ossetian separatists in the North equipped themselves with arms, whereas the supporters of overthrown president Gamsakhurdia controlled Samegrelo – the country's western region. All these groups were composed of untrained and badly organized volunteers, united around their leaders according to the principle typical of feudal relations and obeyed only their immediate leaders. When they had to accomplish political objectives this was normally accompanied by plundering. It is especially true for *Mkhedrioni* who was repeatedly sent to West Georgia to suppress Gamsakhurdia's supporters and in parallel robbed the local population.

The criminalization of the police was the most dangerous fact and the self-proclaimed Military Council was not able to cope with the lawlessness in the country. Eduard Shevardnadze was invited from Moscow to save the situation. The latter was sitting idle in his Moscow apartment after the collapse of the Soviet Union. We still do not know exactly what role he played in overthrowing president Gamsakhurdia.

#### *Russia's role in the preservation of Shevardnadze's power*

Shevardnadze arrived in Georgia in 1992. The Military Council was transformed into the State Council and Shevardnadze became its Chairman. Although the Council united a number of political parties, it was Eduard Shevardnadze, Jaba Ioseliani and Tengiz Kitovani who played a key role. Shevardnadze was influential because of his high international prestige and political experience. The other two possessed military power, which was quite tangible. Both forces needed each other in the struggle against one and the same inner enemy – ex-president Gamsakhurdia's supporters, who were even more dangerous for them than the conflicts in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region. For this reason, Shevardnadze used Ioseliani and Kitovani's paramilitary groups against the ex-presidents' armed detachments in western Georgia. These military campaigns (called 'crusades' by local people) were accompanied by plunder, violence, robbery and murder. Some time later, when armed conflict broke out in Abkhazia, these formations took part in military actions and in the robbery of local population. After all this was the most luxurious region of the Soviet Union, the so-called Soviet Riviera. The Abkhaz military groups did the same when they settled down in the houses seized from ethnic Georgians.

Although the Georgian military formations lost war in Abkhazia, it helped Shevardnadze to shift public attention to the 'external enemy' – separatists and Russia, and inflict military and ideological defeat on Gamsakhurdia's supporters. However, it did not prevent him from accepting Russia's military support to defeat Gamsakhurdia's supporters' military forces at the end of 1993, when, after the military conflict in Abkhazia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia returned from Grozny to Zugdidi to continue his attack on Shevardnadze's remaining military forces and restore his power in Tbilisi. Shevardnadze's former communist nomenclature was more acceptable for

the Kremlin than Gamsakhurdia's dangerous alliance with Jokhar Dudaev, then the president of Chechnya. For this reason, the Russian army and Navy ensured victory over Zvaïd Gamsakhurdia's supporters.

Thus, the nomenclature preserved its posts, but this time, it used democratic and nationalistic rhetoric instead of communist. However, there were still two things that remained the same - ability to misappropriate state money and the dual standards of action.

In exchange for the preservation of its power, the Georgian nomenclature had to comply with the Kremlin's conditions – join the CIS, conclude an agreement with Russia on deploying Russia's military bases on Georgia's territory, and appoint Russia's protégés Vardiko Nadibaidaze and Igor Giorgadze to the posts of Minister of Defense and Minister of State Security.

Criminalization of policy was very typical of the years 1991-2003. This was basically manifested in an illegal and unfair redistribution of state property through the introduction of vouchers, privatization and auctions, misappropriation of state resources, allocated by Western donors for Georgia, large-scale corruption and direct fusion with professional criminal groups, who were involved, in the first place, in the smuggling of different goods through the poorly protected Georgian borders.<sup>5</sup>

Increasingly deteriorating economy, growing external debts that reached almost 2 billion USD, repeated state budget sequesters, which, in 2003, made up nearly 600 million USD<sup>6</sup>, decaying moral values, social pessimism, permanent forgery of presidential and parliamentary elections by the government, led to a deep political crisis and the governmental changes following the Rose Revolution in November 2003.

### *Geopolitics, oil, and smuggling*

In the 1990s, Georgia played a key role for the two competing alliances in the Caucasus: Azerbaijan and Turkey on the one hand, and Armenia and Russia, on the other. Land transport routs of both alliances intersected on the territory of Georgia. It is an especially important territory for Armenia which tries to maintain land connection with Russia.

The oil contract, signed in 1994 between Azerbaijan and the leading oil companies, and described by international experts as 'the deal of the century', made Georgia attractive for the world super-powers. In the mid - 2000s, the debates around the ways

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5 Alexandre Kukhianidze, Alexandre Kapatadze, Roman Gotsiridze. (2004). *Smuggling Through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia*. From: <http://tracc.cdn.ge/publications/index.html>

6 *The Law of Georgia on the 2003 State Budget of Georgia*. From: [http://www.parliament.ge/LEGAL\\_ACTS/1968-rs02.htm](http://www.parliament.ge/LEGAL_ACTS/1968-rs02.htm)

of transporting Azeri oil gradually ceased as it became clear that oil and gas would be delivered to the West through Georgia. This increased Georgia's importance for western states and Russia, since their national interests became linked with this country.

Trying to regain its influence in the region, Russia started to use any available methods – military and economic support to the separatist regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as well as economic, political and direct military pressure on Georgia.

Apart from the Caspian oil, there were also other factors in 1990-2003 that attracted big nation states' and international organizations' attention to Georgia. These were the smuggling of drugs, weapons, nuclear and radioactive substance, human trafficking, illegal migration, as well as the movement of the representatives of international terrorist organizations. All these varieties of crime represented a serious threat to the national security of Georgia and other countries.

Trading in smuggled goods through Abkhazia and South Ossetia turned out to be the biggest problem, since it was closely related with the problem of separatism and led to violence in these regions. The self-declared republics created uncontrollable zones with a large amount of weapons and leading criminals concentrated on these territories. This caused large-scale violence, kidnapping, the practice of hostage taking and other kinds of heavy crime. Unresolved conflicts created a fertile ground for the preservation of power by local clans, which was accomplished through the restriction of democracy, militarism, as well as the use of power as a means for the illegal accumulation of wealth. The situation like this contained a serious threat to the national security of Georgia. However, the solution of this problem faced serious difficulties because of Russia's military, financial and political support to separatism. Russia tried to exert pressure on Georgia through the freezing of conflicts so that it abandoned its pro-Western orientation.

### **Russia's sanctions in 2006 and economic growth in Georgia**

The Rose Revolution brought large-scale reforms, liquidation of organized crime, a sharp reduction of corruption, growing budgetary revenues, and a speedy restoration of the renewed infrastructure. According to EC evaluation, Georgia succeeded in fighting corruption and smuggling, tax collection, timely payment of salaries and pensions, positive macroeconomic changes, reintegration of the Adjara Autonomous Republic into Georgia's economic, social and administrative system and in regaining donors' trust.<sup>7</sup> According to the World Bank, in 2006 Georgia was considered the most

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<sup>7</sup> *Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 2.3.2005. Communication from the Commission to the Council. European Neighbourhood Policy Recommendations for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and for Egypt and Lebanon.* From: [http://www.delgeo.cec.eu.int/en/press/communication\\_0503\\_en.pdf](http://www.delgeo.cec.eu.int/en/press/communication_0503_en.pdf)

reformed country in the world. It took Georgia only one year to move from 112th to 37th place in rank among the states where it is easier to do business.<sup>8</sup> Because of Russia's open support to separatism on the territory of Georgia and Georgia's striving to join the Euro-Atlantic structures, relationship between the two countries steadily deteriorated after the dissolution of the USSR. The tension reached the extreme point when Russia introduced economic sanctions against Georgia in 2006 – banned agricultural imports, mineral waters and wines (i.e. Georgia's strategic products) and also cut the air, sea, land and railway links with Georgia. Kakha Bendukidze, former State Minister in charge of economic reforms and now the President's advisor said that the members of Georgian government did not know exactly Russia's demands and in what circumstances it would abolish sanctions against Georgia.<sup>9</sup>

Also, the Russian leaders organized a mass deportation of Georgian citizens from Russia and banned the issuance of visas to Georgian citizens, which was perceived by Georgian public as something similar to anti-Jewish cleansing in Nazi Germany of the 1930s. According to the data provided by the *Analytical Center of Juri Levada*, 38% of interviewed Russians supported in 2006 the deportation of any category of Georgians, including those who were the citizens of Russia.<sup>10</sup> Despite the Russian Government's declarations, its actions were directed against ordinary citizens, rather than Georgian political leaders. This is how it is still perceived by Georgian public.

However, despite these anti-Georgian measures, according to the IMF mission to Georgia, the country still showed a 8% economic growth.<sup>11</sup> The Georgian President said that everyone expected the country's credit rating would deteriorate due to Russian embargo, but 'Georgia has retained a positive credit rating.'<sup>12</sup> International experts also pointed to a successful impact of the Rose Revolution on fighting crime and corruption.<sup>13</sup>

Georgian public believed that the aim of Russia's anti-Georgian actions was quite clear. They aimed to undermine Georgia's economy, and, finally, make Georgia change its intentions regarding joining NATO, integrating into the western democracies or allying with the US. However, the actual outcome was not achieved. According to

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8 World Bank statistics . <http://www.doingbusiness.org/EconomyRankings/>

9 Обмена политических взглядов на комфортную жизнь не будет. Интервью с Кахой Бендукидзе. Вебсайт: <http://www.polit.ru/analytcs/2006/10/10/bendukidze.html>

10 Izobrazhaya zhertvy. From: <http://nregion.com/txt.php?i=8598>

11 МВФ: Несмотря на российское эмбарго, в Грузии зафиксирован экономический рост. <http://www.civil.ge/rus/article.php?id=12649>

12 М. Саакашвили: Открытие новых предприятий является ответом на российское эмбарго. <http://www.civil.ge/rus/article.php?id=12657>

13 Louise Shelley. *Georgian Success in Fighting Transnational Crime*. From: <http://www.american.edu/tracc/resources/publications/shelle77.html>

the public opinion poll, conducted by the Lithuanian ‘Baltic Surveys’, and the Gellap Institute in Georgia in February 1997, 83% of interviewed Georgian citizens supported Georgia’s integration into NATO, and still 74% - in 2006.

In parallel, Russia strengthened military, political and financial support to the separatist regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and, by doing so, reinforced Georgia’s motivation to exclude it from the peacemaking process as one of the parties to the conflict.

The Russian sanctions of 2006 only insignificantly slowed down Georgia’s economic development for a short period of time. The economic development rate remained high in 2007. On the whole, the sanctions applied by Russia yielded the opposite effect: Georgia became less economically dependent on Russia and even more distanced itself from the latter in political terms. Later Russia took off the mask of conflict mediator and peacemaker and directly attacked Georgia.

### **Russia’s military threat**

The small victorious war made Russian politicians, the military and the experts that were close to political circles, ‘euphoric.’ Numerous articles that appeared in that period pointed to the necessity of annihilating Georgia as a state, Georgia’s *desovereignization* (Russian analysts’ term) and its full fragmentation into vassal quasi-states. At the same time, the articles clearly manifested **anti-Western orientation and the reliance on power**. For example, in one of his articles, Mikhail Alexandrov, Head of the Department of Trans-Caucasus at the Institute of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) said that thanks to the war, Russia had become an ‘independent center of power’, and, as it turned out, ‘the West did not have enough power to stop Russia’s actions.’ ‘Georgia is our Kursk battle and the battle for Ukraine is waiting for us in the future. Our victory in confrontation with the West will depend on whether we play our cards right in Ukraine’.<sup>14</sup> M. Alexandrov discusses Georgia as a separate issue and criticizes the Russian authorities for their refusal to capture Tbilisi because of their reluctance to worsen relations with the West. He believes that Russia should support Georgia’s fragmentation into several semi-state entities. As a result, ‘. . . Adjara, Mengrelia., Javakheti - a region populated with Armenians, and Kvemo Kartli – a region populated with the Azeri, should receive their status of state.’<sup>15</sup>

According to Alexandrov, Azerbaijan’s destiny is not easy, either. ‘Such a political transformation in the Caucasus might help the solution of the Nagorno Karabakh

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14 Михаил Александров. (3 октября, 2008 г.) *Начало конца ельцинской эпохи. Как нам обустроить постсоветское пространство*. From: <http://www.apn.ru/publications/article20771.htm>

15 Ibid

problem... since, in the future, Kvemo Kartli region might decide to secede from the Georgian Confederation and join Azerbaijan. In exchange for this, Baku could agree to recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh' – he says. Of course, Alexandrov is not very much interested in what the people in Georgia, Azerbaijan or Kvemo Kartli think. He demands attacking Tbilisi and capturing Saakashvili to establish a 'new democratic regime in Georgia.' It seems Alexandrov means some special kind of democracy with Russian specificities, which is created by occupants, rather than Georgian people. When talking in front of the Russian Government in February 2008, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin also noted that the development of democracy in Russia would consider 'national and political peculiarities.'

In conclusion Alexandrov says that Russia and its army could become a guarantor of all these transformations in the South Caucasus. They would '... resist the penetration of the West's political and military influence' into its territories.<sup>16</sup> This could be hardly interpreted otherwise than the threat of new military intervention.

Another Russian military expert Aleksey Vaschenko believes that there is an anti-Russian curve which is the reason for the implementation of the Silk Road project as well as of the involvement of the West, China and CIS countries in the anti-Russian activities. '... and this curve lies just through Georgia ... the knot is tied in Georgia and Saakashvili is a key figure there.'<sup>17</sup>

Vaschenko thinks that '.... Georgia has become the *main* bridgehead for NATO in the implementation of this plan. ... It contains the biggest danger for the future of Russia ... and, for this reason, Russia should split the remaining part of Georgia into pieces as soon possible.'<sup>18</sup>

Vashenko believes that '... during this conflict Russia could have done to Saakashvili the same as the Americans did to Saddam Hussein, i.e. reach Tbilisi, overthrow Saakashvili and replace him with their appointee like Giorgadze.'<sup>19</sup> Igor Giorgadze, a former KGB staff and State Security Minister of Georgia, is known as the organizer of the 1995 terrorist act against the former President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze. Giorgadze is still protected by Moscow, which refuses to extradite him to Georgia for trial.

In 2009, Shakhin Abbasov, political scientist from Baku, said on radio Liberty (program 'Caucasian Crossroads') that 'Russia could not achieve its aims in the first war. The objective was not Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence. The objective

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16 Ibid

17 Алексей Ващенко. (29 сентября, 2008 г.). Расчленение Грузии как политическая необходимость. Антироссийская дуга и её архитекторы. From: <http://www.apn.ru/publications/article20753.htm>

18 Ibid

19 Ibid

was to block the access of the West to Georgia and the entire region. This objective was not achieved. I don't know how the things will develop, but the possibility of future escalation should not be ruled out'.<sup>20</sup>

After US president Barack Obama expressed his firm support to Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-renewal of military conflict during his speech in Kremlin on July 6, 2009,<sup>21</sup> some Russian experts said that Russia was not going to attack Georgia. According to Sergey Markedonov, expert of Russian Institute for Political and Military Analysis, 'on the whole, the Russian side solved its problems in the region by recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Of course no one is going to 'attack Tbilisi.'<sup>22</sup> However, as the above mentioned Russian experts say, Russia did not reach its objectives, the most important of which was to block the way for the West into the South Caucasus, control the energy corridors running through its territories and prevent Georgia from integrating into the Euro-Atlantic structures by splitting it into separate vassal territories.

Even though after President Obama's speech Russians' invasion became less probable, the Georgian forces are permanently waiting for another attack on the territory of Georgia<sup>23</sup> because of military and political threats from high ranking authorities (e.g. a well known declaration of the Russian Defense Minister in Turkey in November 2008 that Georgia's attempts to join NATO might escalate the conflicts between Georgia and Russia, which is perceived as a real reason for the Russian invasion in August 2008).<sup>24</sup>

If we take into consideration President Medvedev's repeatedly voiced ideas about Russia's spheres of interest and privileged rights in the post-Soviet space, Russia can be perceived as a potentially dangerous, unpredictable country not only for Georgia, but also for Ukraine, Azerbaijan and other former Soviet republics. This is another obstacle to the relations between Russia and the West. Russian politicians' declarations about a multi-polar world actually '... imply that Russia will become a Euro-Asian pole, and other countries of the post-Soviet space will be in its subordination.'<sup>25</sup>

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20 *Грузию ожидает новая война с Россией?* 27 мая, 2009 г. From: <http://www.nregion.com/txt.php?i=31523>

21 *Press Conference by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia.* The Kremlin. Moscow, Russia. (July 6, 2009). Washington, D.C.: The White House. Office of the Press Secretary.

22 *Сергей Маркедонов: вероятность новой войны в Закавказье минимальна.* (10 июля 2009 г.). From: <http://www.nregion.com/txt.php?i=32265>

23 Interview with a high-ranking staff at the Prosecutor's office in Samegrelo –Zemo Svaneti region .

24 Глава МО России: втягивание Грузии в НАТО может спровоцировать более серьезный конфликт. From: <http://nregion.com/txt.php?i=27870>

25 *Американский эксперт об отношениях России и США: НАТО, ПРО, Грузия, Украина, Иран, Нагорный Карабах, Афганистан.* (8 июля 2009 г.). Информационное Агентство REGNUM. <http://www.regnum.ru/news/fd-abroad/georgia/1183941.html>

Contrary to Russia's imperial approach, Hillary Clinton, State Secretary of the US, formulated on July 17, 2009, the concept of *multi-partner* rather than *multi-polar* world. According to this concept, sovereign democracies have the right to take independent decisions and choose their partners and allies,<sup>26</sup> instead of being victims of big neighbors' 'spheres of influence.'

Therefore, the main reason for hostile relations between Georgia and Russia is the difference in value orientations and the foreign policy priorities based on these values, rather than Abkhazia or South Ossetia. If Georgia strives to join the Euro-Atlantic structures and envisages itself in the future as a NATO and EU member state, Russia holds the contrary position: It is hostile towards NATO and is against Georgia's approximation to the EU. This means that Georgia has chosen as its priority, as its political ideal, liberal democracy, whereas Russia, who has rejected this ideal, perceives itself as a superpower, and, therefore, the main pole in the post-Soviet space. This is the main source of Georgia-Russia conflict, whereas Abkhazia and South Ossetia are just the means to suppress Georgia. The Russian leaders, who annihilated hundreds of thousands people in Chechnya and labeled all the Chechen separatists terrorists, who have to be 'soaked in the outhouse'<sup>27</sup>, suddenly became extremely caring and deeply concerned about Abkhaz and Ossetian separatists. Hidden behind the peace-keeper's masks for a number of years, Russians illegally provided the Abkhaz and Ossetians with machine guns, tanks, armored troop carriers, military helicopters and airplanes, and turned them against Georgia. The policy like this finally resulted in military confrontation between Russia and Georgia and sharp changes in the geopolitical situation in the region, which, in its turn, complicated Russia's relations with actually all the Western countries. In the situation like this, Turkey became somewhat active in the region.

Another serious reason for Georgia-Russia conflict is the energy problem. Russia tries to monopolize control over energy resources of the Caspian basin and Central Asia, whereas Georgia undermines its plans. From Russia's point of view, the one who controls Georgia also exercises control over the oil and gas running from the Caspian Basin and Central Asia to the West. The essence of Russia's neo-imperialist strivings is that the restoration of its dominance on the territories of the former USSR, and, first of all, in Georgia, is necessary to monopolize control over energy resources. We could assume that after August 2008, the Russian authorities had to limit themselves

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26 *Перезагрузка отношений США с РФ не будет происходить за счет Грузии и Украины.* (18 июля 2009 г.). <http://www.nregion.com/txt.php?i=32414>

27 Russian jargon, meaning physical annihilation of people. Putin vowed to soak the leaders of Chechen resistance in the outhouse. He used this expression in comments on September 23, 1999, when the Russian aviation shelled the Grozny airport, the oil processing factory and the blocks of buildings in the northern suburbs. See *Мочить в сортире*. Википедия. <http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

to the occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia for a number of reasons: strong pressure from the West; readiness of the Georgian army to fight until the last drop of their blood while defending Tbilisi; absence of any pro-Russian political forces in Georgia; Russia feared that capturing Tbilisi and the assassination of Saakashvili would make him a national hero; Russia's groundless hopes that Georgian people would overthrow President Saakashvili. However, Russia demonstrated its ability to paralyze the operation of strategically important transport routes, blow up the main railway line and bomb the areas adjacent to the Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan oil pipeline, which is a sort of threat for the rest of the world.

As a result of the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008, Georgian population's perception of one's own security and the main threats to such security has dramatically changed. According to the December 2008 sociological survey conducted by us with the population of Zugdidi region in Georgia, the perception of threats shows the following distribution: Russian army located in Gali district – 80%, Abkhaz criminals – 53%, Abkhaz armed formations – 41%, Georgian criminals – 17%.<sup>28</sup> It has to be mentioned that if before the war with Russia the main threat to local population's security was that organized crime that involved smuggling, after the war, the Russian military threat became most important.

### **Future prospects of improving Georgia-Russia relations**

If we take into consideration the fact that none of these two countries achieved their aims through military means and that they are still in conflict, the possibility of a new confrontation or military clashes should not be ruled out. What makes the problem even more difficult is that Russia refuses to deal with President Mikheil Saakashvili in person as well as with his government. In February 2010 Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said once again that that he was not going to deal with the present leader of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili and declared him *persona non grata* on the territory of Russia<sup>29</sup>. On the other hand, the Georgian government is not very enthusiastic about establishing relations with the leaders of the occupant countries, either. The problem for the Russian leadership is that President Mikheil Saakashvili is still very much supported by a significant part of electorate and the inter-governmental dialogue at the presidential level is not likely to take place for quite a long time. At the same time, interstate relations have turned out to be frozen on any level. The

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28 Alexandre Kukhianidze. (May 2009). Ways of Resolving the Problems of Crime and Ensuring Security of the Population in the Zugdidi District of Georgia and Along the Left Bank of the River Enguri. In: *Georgian and Abkhaz Perspectives on Human Security and Development in Conflict-Affected Areas. A Policy Research Initiative*. Madrid: CITpax.

29 *С Саакашвили отныне разговор короткий*. 18.02.2010. <http://www.georgiatimes.info/interview/30964.html>

Russian government's attempts to establish relations with one part of the Georgian political opposition led by former Prime Minister Zurab Nogaideli are interpreted by the Georgian government and the majority of Georgian opposition as Russia's attempt to form a new fifth column.

Another long-term possibility is the development of Russia itself and its approximation with the West. If this happens it will be easier to solve the Georgian problem since both Russia and Georgia will speak a common language. However, it is only a theoretical possibility at present, since the policy pursued by the Russian authorities actually points to the strengthening of authoritarian tendencies and Russia's confrontation with the West. Differently from Russia's policy which is independent from the West, Georgia's policy very much depends on Western assistance and the prevalence of Euro-Atlantic orientation in the Georgian public. At the same time, any leader's attempts to establish authoritarian regime are strongly resisted by civil society and, are clearly bound to fail. For example, the protest marches organized by the opposition in November 2007 and Spring 2009, largely changed the government's behavior. This resulted not only in the weakening of authoritarian tendencies and the strengthening of democratic tendencies, but also contributed to an increased political stability in the country. Thus, the Kremlin's hopes that the Georgian nation would finalize the work started by Kremlin did not come true. It seems the Kremlin will have to witness Saakashvili's regime for quite a long time, which means that no tangible progress is to be expected in Georgia-Russia relations (at the state level) in the near future.

In the situation like this there is still some room left for the maintenance of Georgia-Russia relations. This could be done through folk diplomacy, meetings between Russian and Georgian journalists and experts as well as the relationship between the Georgian and Russian Orthodox Churches. It is not a lot for the time being, but it is still the only ray of light in the kingdom of darkness, which may lead to the revival of past friendly relations between Georgia and Russia. If the governments of both countries have no political will or resources to improve relations, the only force which can, at least partially, fill the vacuum is civil society. It is just civil society that can take responsibility for the relationship between the two nations until more tolerant politicians come to power. It has to be noted, however, that after Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence, the regulation of Georgia-Russian relations is becoming an unsolvable problem even for the civil society of both countries, since someone has to abandon one's own principles.

'Restoration of normal Russian-Georgian relations will, of course, take a lot of time, but those aspects of relations that are linked with the Abkhazia and South Ossetia problem, still look, in principle, unsolvable.'<sup>30</sup> I can say nothing about Russia, but in

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30 Максим Хрусталеv. *За российско-грузинские отношения взялись церкви*. 09.11.2009. [http://news.km.ru/za\\_rossijsko-gruzinskie\\_otnoshen](http://news.km.ru/za_rossijsko-gruzinskie_otnoshen)

Georgia, even Zurab Nogaideli is not going to abandon his principles.

And yet, despite the war and regardless of what has been said above, a large number of Georgian and Russian citizens still believe that their people have common history, religion and culture. 29,5% of Georgian respondents and 29,15% of respondents in Russia believe that kindred ties are a uniting factor.<sup>31</sup> This makes us hopeful that these relations might normalize in the future.

### **Georgia and the Turkish platform of peace and stability in the Caucasus**

During the Moscow meeting of August 13, 2008, between President Dmitry Medvedev and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish Prime Minister proposed a new concept – the platform of peace and stability in the Caucasus, which is supposed to unite the three South Caucasus states, Turkey and Russia. The main objectives of this initiative are declared to be peace, regional security, and economic cooperation as well as the cooperation in the energy sector. For this reason it was supported by the government of all the five countries. However, the Georgian authorities supported the concept on the condition of full de-occupation of Georgian territory by Russia. In his parliamentary speech of July 20, 2009, President Saakashvili said: ‘There is the army of foreign occupants in our land. The war has not ended . . . Moreover; the war has not been lost where we are standing, where the five-cross Georgian flag is fluttering and where we did not sign the capitulatory agreement. . . . Hostilities will end and friendship will start when the last foreign soldier leaves the Georgian territory. No one should have any illusions about this.’<sup>32</sup> Despite the termination of military actions, the war between Russia and Georgia is still going on in the form of political, diplomatic and informational confrontation. Russia is not going to leave the occupied territories; moreover, it has managed to build there its military bases and make the borders of Georgia’s separatist regions into the de facto state borders guarded by occupants. In the situation like this, Georgia can’t participate together with Russia in the Platform of peace and stability in the Caucasus, and the Platform itself does not seem to be promising, since the land routes linking Turkey with Azerbaijan and Armenia with Russia intersect just in Georgia. Given severe hostility between Georgia and Russia, the changing relations between Armenia and Turkey and the discussions about the possibility of opening the Armenian-Turkish border become a matter of especial interests for Georgia.

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31 *Жители Грузии считают, что важнейшим фактором для восстановления российско-грузинских отношений является общая религия.* Совместное международное исследование исследовательского холдинга «Ромир» и Georgian Opinion Research Business International (GORBI). 10 марта 2009 г. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/578916.html>

32 *Президент обратился к депутатам.* (21 июля 2009 г.). Тбилиси: Civil Georgia. <http://www.civil.ge/rus/article.php?id=19624>

There are many different opinions about the given issue, as in addition to both positive and negative aspects, the problem contains potential threats for Georgia. Development of positive relations between Turkey and Armenia suits Georgia, because this will indirectly lead to increased stability in Javakheti region populated with ethnic Armenians. This will be possible due to more active involvement of the local population in trade and economic relations after the completion of the Akhalkalaki-Kars railway. However, Shirak Torosyan, the Chairman of the Javakhk Union of Compatriots believes that the construction of the railway Akhalkalaki-Kars is against Armenia's interests. 'Everyone understands that if Kars-Akhalkalaki runs through Javakhk, this will result in the development of economy in the region: new jobs will be created and people will think of new ways to make trade profitable; but, having realized that the construction of the railway does not meet the interests of homeland Armenia, Javakhk residents protest against this' – said Torosyan.<sup>33</sup> However, political situation in Javakheti might get complicated if Russia tries to provoke another conflict through the use of local radical political activists.

It is suitable for Georgia with a clearly pro-western orientation and tense relations with Russia to have also pro-western Armenia, who, like Georgia, has friendly relations with Turkey. On the other hand, after the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh, the main flow of the cargo transported for Armenia runs via Georgia and the opening of the borders with Turkey will inevitably divert cargo and reduce the profit from transit. However, these losses are not an important factor. Georgian expert Paata Zakareishvili thinks that 'Opening of the border will bring peace and stability to the entire Caucasus and will compensate the loss Georgia might see in case the border is opened.'<sup>34</sup>

In case the Turkey-Armenia border is opened, the possibility of using by Russia the territory of Turkey to supply its military base in Gurmi will contain a bigger threat for Georgia. Whether the Turkish government is able to resist Russia's pressure is a difficult question for Georgia to answer. During the military actions in August 2008, Russia actively used its naval base in Ukraine and totally ignored the protest of the latter. The military base in Gurmi contains a serious military threat for Georgia. It is not likely that the Russian authorities will ask the Armenian government permission regarding its utilization against Georgia. Despite the fact that Turkey is NATO's member state, the transportation of Russia's military cargo via its territory is not so

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33 «Armenians from Javakhk are against building the Kars-Akhalkalaki railway' - said Shirak Torosyan, the Chairman of the Javakhk Union of Compatriots at the Erevan press-conference on June 15, 2006. <http://javakhk.net/forum/index.php?s=46bacf2d589089897f73ab153efe99ab&showtopic=217&pid=12149&st=0&#entry12149>

34 Карине Тер-Саакян. (4 мая, 2009 г.). *Грузия тоже не хочет открытия армяно-турецкой границы*. Аналитический отдел «PanARMENIAN.Net». <http://analitika.at.ua/news/2009-04-05-7430>

unlikely given the fact that Russia itself agreed to provide transit routes for NATO cargo meant for Afghanistan.

## **Conclusions**

Thus, if before the war with Russia, Georgia's main national priorities were fight against organized crime and corruption and, also, economic development, after the war, along with economic and democratic development, resistance to Russia's threat became a key priority. It has remained a priority until now. Georgian citizens' security has sharply deteriorated due to the August 2008 war. In addition, the population's perception of security has also changed. Before the August war criminals contained a basic threat for Georgian citizens, but after the war the presence of the Russian occupational army in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is considered to be the biggest threat. Russia does not let EUMM enter Abkhazia and South Ossetia. For this reason, this organization does not have the opportunity to study, objectively, the incidents occurring in the region. As for the UN and the OSCE, they have been forced out of these territories.

The main reason of conflict between Russia and Georgia is the conflict of values. West oriented Georgia strives to become a liberal democracy, whereas Russia's way is confrontation with the West and the accomplishment of the idea of becoming a super-power, which is translated into the Eurasian center within the framework of the multi-polar world, the center with privileged rights and sphere of influence in the post-soviet space. Georgia finds Turkey attractive as long as the latter is building a liberal democracy and is EU oriented.

The Russia-Georgia war only reinforced the importance of foreign policy priorities for Georgia - joining NATO and the EU, and strategic cooperation with the US. This could be proved by Georgia's participation in a new program called 'Eastern Partnership', the military training conducted in Georgia in May 2009 with the participation of NATO as well as signing the strategic partnership agreement with the US.

The second reason for conflict between Russia and Georgia is Russia's attempts to monopolize control over the Caspian and Central Asian resources, whereas their transit through the territory of Georgia undermines this kind of monopoly.

Even though the Russian government recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence, which created an impasse in the regulation of Georgia-Russia relations, people's diplomacy, meetings between Russian and Georgian experts and journalists as well as the contact between the Russian and Georgian churches can save these relations from a total failure.

Despite its attractiveness, it is not actually possible to implement, at the present stage, the Platform of Peace and Stability in the Caucasus, which has been proposed by Turkey and envisages the participation of the five countries in the region. The reason is the occupation of the Georgian territories in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia.

The opening of the Armenia-Turkey border might entail positive consequences for Georgia only if Russia does not use the Turkish territory for the transportation of its military cargo to the Gurmi military base and does not provoke a new conflict in Javakheti.

*George Khutsishvili*

## **Contemporary Russia-Georgia Relations**

### **The Orwellian Power Phenomenon in 21st Century**

“The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. What pure power means you will understand presently. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means; it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of power is power.”

*George Orwell. '1984'*

At first sight, the relations between Russia and Georgia look like a multi-layer geopolitical paradox. (1) Georgia has former autonomies alienated as a result of the armed conflicts, necessary yet insufficient condition of whose return is Russia's active promotion of this cause. In full awareness of that, antagonism is still purposefully developed in Georgia against Russia. (2) Russia, in its turn, sees Georgia as its own alienated territory, which she has fed for centuries and who now turned her down after the fall of USSR. Russia is puzzled why should anti-Russian sentiment be wide spread in Georgia and thinks it normal that she promoted secessionism in Georgian autonomies, contrary to its broker status and acknowledgment of the territorial integrity of Georgia. (3) With no external leverage in view to enforce Russia's collaboration

in Abkhazia and South Ossetia issues, Georgia still insists on seeking such leverage and appeals to the West to ensure it. (4) Stating that the war cannot be over while occupation lasts, Georgia's leaders reject the possibility of dialogue and negotiations with Russia, "until the last occupier soldier leaves the Georgian territory". (5) Announcing as a state strategy "Cooperation through Engagement" with the seceded regions, Georgian leaders freeze contacts with the de facto authorities. (6) The official Georgian propaganda tries to create a picture of Russia soon falling apart as a result of erosion in North Caucasus, although there are no indications to that. (7) Declaring Russia as a number one external threat for Georgia, a number of Georgia's strategic (energy and economy) assets are transferred to Russian state-controlled companies, and this continues well after the August 2008 war. (8) Speaking about stability and security in the Caucasus region, Russia is at the same time building her military presence through bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia who she recognized unilaterally as independent states, while refusing to allow to these territories the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) creation of which in August 2008 she had endorsed. (9) The military-strategic gambling with "restoring the constitutional order" in Tskhinvali had cost inestimable losses to Georgia, yet the demand to bring to book the gamblers did not have any development in Georgia. (10) The international community blamed Russia for a so-called "disproportionate reaction" to Saakashvili's actions in Tskhinvali – in fact a full-fledged aggression against a sovereign state - but no one ever raised a question of responsibility of the Russian leaders. And so on, and so forth...

To untangle this mass of oddities and contradictions, uncover its logic (not always normal and sane) and comprehend the nature of this pseudo-paradox, it is necessary to trace the genesis of the parties' interrelations, the **impact of the leaders' personalities** - seen in the mirror of the mentality of respective communities - and analyze the ratio between the subjective and objective factors, which, of course, exceeds the scope of one article. Behind what looks like playing with fire and instability, it is however possible to see the contours of underlying unstable power equilibrium.

### **The Sources of Russia-Georgia Standoff**

Through the entire post-Soviet period Russia was seen in Georgia as a party interested in weakening the reemerging Georgian statehood and turning the small South-Caucasus country into a speechless promoter of the Russian policies in the region. Since the beginning of 1990s Russia was widely seen as establishing *hegemonic stability* in the post-Soviet space through the tools of reunification such as CIS. Only the Baltic states were seen as irreversibly fallen out and lost for Moscow at that time. For the rest of the former Soviet republics/states the prospect of creation of Moscow-dominated confederation of legally sovereign states with different levels of affiliation to the center was not assessed as improbable. Reaching respective agreements

with Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan was deemed as having crucial importance in order to implement the goal of reunification, while newly independent states such as Georgia were also an object of interest for NATO. The main instrument of enforcement to motivate Georgia to reunification – an Orwellian *doublethink* encrusted in it - was seen in ethno-political conflicts involving Georgian autonomies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and raging since the times the fall of the Soviet system has started. Practically all Georgians have been convinced that Russia played an active role in instigating those conflicts<sup>1</sup>.

At the end of 1980s Zviad Gamsakhurdia's "Round Table" party declared USSR a "modernized Russian empire" that Georgia had to liberate from to ensure the revival of its statehood and resolution of the disputes with Abkhaz and Ossets. It was immediately clear however that the ethno-nationalist slogans of Gamsakhurdia's would wind up nationalism in the autonomies and serve as an alienation factor for Abkhaz and Ossets who feared the consequences of restoration of the Georgian statehood. This has prompted the communities in question to actively seek Moscow's support in raising the status of their autonomies to resubmit them directly to the Center (there was no pronounced request for secession at that time). When the Center suddenly ceased to exist, and fifteen nations appeared as separate and on their own instead, the fears have escalated. Somewhat different expectations - however short-lived – arose, whilst distrust in the autonomies persisted, after Eduard Shevardnadze's return to Georgia in March of 1992, until, in a few months, the Georgian armed militia entered Abkhazia in August of 1992, formally – to ensure the safety of the railway tracks. As a matter of fact, this was more an attempt of power demonstration in order to depress the separatist moods in Abkhazia. This operation led however to the catastrophic effects for Georgia who faced the armed clashes that broke out the Georgian-Abkhaz war and the centrifugal processes that finally turned to be irreversible.

In spite of all, both during the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992-1993 and well after its tragic outcome Russia was seen in Georgia as an actual holder of the keys to the conflict, with whom it is crucial to maintain stable relations. That was why Shevardnadze's government reconciled with the appointment of three power ministers – the interior, state security and defense – by Moscow, until the situation changed dramatically after the autumn of 1995 terrorist attack on the President. The conspiracy led to then Minister of the State Security Igor Georgadze. In spite of the entire complexity and controversy of Russia's image in Georgia and the ensuing distrust<sup>2</sup>, Russia was not

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1 Existence of such partisanship is often denied in Russia, but the history of Abkhazia in interpretation of Voronov, describing it as essentially unrelated to Georgia's history existed as well since the Soviet times.

2 The contemporary mood was expressed by a daily paper writing, "What good can we expect from a country that has traded us for Abkhaz and Ossets with a sole purpose of humiliating and punishing us for our strife for independence?").

unanimously seen as an enemy up to the summer of 2004, a turning point in Georgia-Russia relations, which can be proven by the positive public reaction to the mission of Igor Ivanov to Tbilisi on November 23, 2003 (the day Shevardnadze resigned and the “rose revolution” won) and to Batumi on May 6, 2004 (Aslan Abashidze’s flight to Moscow and the victory of Ajaran stage of the “rose revolution”). Such a reaction in regard to Russia would be hardly imaginable in all following years, earlier than or after August of 2008. Let us thus try to understand what happened in between.

### **Factors of “Post-Rosy” Development of Events and the Role of the Leaders**

The effect of mass mobilization towards ‘liberation from the empire’ achieved by Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava by the beginning of 1990s created temptation for the ‘direct democracy’ leaders to revitalize it in a new form of charismatic rule that started to materialize since 2004. It was everyone’s understanding that reforming of the corrupt state structures required extraordinary measures and, first of all, refilling the state treasury. A radical method of solution to the latter problem was found in a peculiar form of “expropriation of expropriators”, which actually meant an ultimatum to the so-called oligarchs (persons that got rich under Shevardnadze’s rule): “either you submit a good part of your fortune, or you end up in jail”. Having ensured an unheard-of credit of trust from the population – who did not react even to the introduction of super-presidential rule in February 2004 - the young US-backed leaders headed on with snap social and economic reforms, most of which were risky and reckless. On the other hand, it was clear to all that materialization of the main promise of the “rose revolution” – restoration of the country’s territorial integrity – would hardly be possible within the political lifespan of the “rosy team” without an active collaboration of Russia to that end. Spring of 2004 was marked with official visits, business forums and invitations to investment. Prior to that Putin sent an ethnic Georgian Vladimir Chkhikvishvili as his envoy to Georgia, which was also seen as working towards building bridges. Yet very soon it also became clear that rapprochement with Russia might cause alienation of Washington who at that time maintained its own perspective on the developments in the post-Soviet space. The choice was to be made, and it was made – as it turned out, irrevocably – by summer of 2004 when the nature of relations between Georgia and Russia changed dramatically.

Russia has at least twice in the period before summer of 2004 demonstrated its support of the developments in Georgia: final resignation of Shevardnadze’s on November 23, 2003 and the retreat to Moscow of Aslan Abashidze on May 6, 2004, both developments being associated at that time with the mission of Igor Ivanov who in general was positively perceived in Georgia, not in the least because of his Georgian family ties. Only later considerations appeared that Russia was trying to *post factum* ascribe to its influence the development of events that would take place

anyway and to demonstrate its constructive role. And the whole situation, when finalization of the political processes in Georgia required a Russian “seal” on it was looked at with growing irritation by the young reformers. *It seemed that the Moor hath done his duty, let him go.* A sharp turn in Georgia- Russia relations acquired the form that shocked many.<sup>3</sup>

It was during the aggravation of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in summer 2004, when the seeming irrationality, later recurrently emerging in Georgian policy, first manifested itself. You had an impression that the young democrat leaders of the velvet revolution and the advocates of liberal values preferred, for some reason, not to prevent crises or regulate conflicts, but rather assert themselves through their escalation to the peak point, followed by the restoration of order through violent methods. This did not, of course, fit in the common understanding of the rationality of leaders who declared the building of a democratic European-style state as their goal.

The strategic plan behind seemingly irrational and counterproductive movements started to clarify only during the following years. The main mechanism used to consolidate the appropriate internal political situation was creation of the image of permanent external threat and marginalization of the political opposition through a constant search for ‘Moscow’s hand’ as stimulator of any mass protest activity or the sources of the opposition’s material means. To ensure a full intrastate control, it was necessary to have an irrational and aggressive source of external threat; as for Moscow, it brilliantly (and even willingly) fitted into this role.

Outside the post-Soviet space the rationale of the Georgian strategists’ thinking has often been seen as follows: a small nation that has recently become *de jure* independent and is now struggling to affirm its *de facto* independence, which has had a recent history of totalitarian domination and then a period of perceived failed statehood, needs to cut all ties with its former parent state - starting from those in politics and economy and ending with mentality and psychology – to be able to affirm itself as a sustained and sovereign state. Especially if the former parent state happens to be next door and is even appointed to mediate your small state’s internal disputes, and does it definitely not in favor of the latter.<sup>4</sup>

One of the observed inconsistencies in the leaders’ behavior was that they made public mockery and insulting statements towards those, with whom they were supposed to solve important issues at the negotiation table. The discussion of this phenomenon

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3 Many people still remember the statements of one of the leading figures of the summer crisis of 2004, Minister of Defense Irakli Okruashvili

4 George Khutsishvili. The Abkhazia and South Ossetia Cases: Spoilers in the Nearly Collapsed Peace Process, in Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond. eds. “*Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution*”. Tokyo - New York - Paris: United Nations University Press.

in the press and by public was often reduced to the attempts to identify who started first and who smacked whom, whereas more important issues (how this or that behavior influences the chances of achieving agreement and facilitates the solution of interstate problems) were practically ignored. The Russian and Georgian press and internet editions ecstatically discussed the indirect verbal duels between Putin and Saakashvili. Georgian TV created satirical sketches around the theme ‘Kokoity fandarast<sup>5</sup>, regularly broadcast the records of anti-Georgian speeches in Russian Duma, as well as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s declarations full of threats and hatred.

The main bogey in anti-Georgian propaganda in Russia was Georgia’s striving to join NATO, which was interpreted by Moscow as Georgia’s new government’s attempt to gain the trust of ‘western patrons’ through the creation of tension zones and NATO’s military bases at Russia’s southern borders. For Georgia, which was weakened by the conflicts and the syndrome of one’s own vulnerability, integration into the European community (in regard to which the national consensus has always existed) was directly linked with joining the system of collective security, part of which Europe was, i.e. NATO. That is why the unifying term ‘Euro-Atlantic integration’ emerged in the Georgian foreign policy discourse. Moreover, Georgia saw that the Baltic and Eastern European states joined the EC in the same way. Russia’s anti-NATO policy could impede Georgia’s Euro-integration, especially in the light of Georgians’ grown mistrust in CIS as a mechanism able to ensure the country’s security and facilitate conflict resolution. The preference of the policy of neutrality for the solution of Russian issue was only openly considered only in a few groups of Georgian society and the Labor Party. Although the results of the NATO Bucharest summit in March 2008 were negative for Georgia (the summit was supposed to offer Georgia MAP - a *membership action plan* considered to be the final step before receiving NATO membership), the excitement around the Summit had stimulated Russian authorities to conduct pro-active actions in the conflict zone. This showed that Russia’s position, also in relation to NATO, acquired the character of ultimatum. The conditions for a radical solution of the problem that emerged in summer 2008 were ensured as a result of Saakashvili’s Tskhinvali operation and the subsequent punitive operation carried out by the Russian troops, known as the August war.

### **The Post-August Stage in Russia-Georgia Relations**

The lessons taught by history clearly show that regional wars are one of the most powerful factors of strengthening the government’s position within the country (the country can be ruled by harsher methods and the people will still be united around the leaders), which, in its turn, helps strengthen the government’s position also outside the

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5 The wordplay of what in Ossetian means ‘farewell’ had an ambivalent reading because of its resemblance with another word meaning ‘bugger’.

country (people's support to the leaders weakens the attempts to make adjustments to the authorities' external policies). Since the beginning of his presidency, Putin had been asserting himself as leader through the Chechen wars and the blown up residential blocks in Moscow. From the beginning of his presidency, Bush Jr turned out to be the kind of leader who had to accept the challenge of the September 11 terrorist acts and announce a global 'war on terror', with the Iraq war as its main component. Neither socio-economic, nor any other indicators (no matter how alarming they looked) could impede these leaders' re-election, so strong was their power due to the already achieved mobilization against the external threat. As for the situation in Georgia, Saakashvili was more vulnerable in this respect. The wave of disappointment after the 'Rose Revolution', crackdown on the participants of mass protest actions on November 7, 2007, and the followed snap presidential elections, which Saakashvili won with insignificant advantage over his not so strong opponent, did not bring confidence about the stability of domestic political situation.

The situation sharply changed after the five-day war in 2008. After President Viktor Yuschenko left the political stage and Viktor Yanukovich won the presidential marathon, Georgian policy in relation to Russia lost its main support within the space called by Russia as 'near abroad'. The Eastern European countries had dropped out even earlier; only the Baltic states were still there. However, it was difficult to regard them as part of the post-Soviet space since they joined the united Europe soon after the collapse of the USSR, and also became NATO members. The initiators of 'color revolutions' believed that under their influence Russia would be locked within the 'democratic arc'; this would have a serious impact on the processes developing in this country, and, finally, the geo-political arrangement in the post-soviet space would clearly favor pro-western orientation. The things may really eventually develop in that direction, but the attempt to forcibly squeeze the historical framework of the implementation of this grand scheme and reduce it to a 'five-year plan', turned out to be unrealistic. New trends occurred both in Washington and Brussels (basically under the influence of Paris and Berlin in the latter case) soon after August - the reset policy, cooperation, constructive engagement, and finally, "Security of Europe cannot be ensured without Russia" (the thesis that appeared at the time when I was finalizing the work on this article). However, we should keep in mind that all this was and is taking place against the background of persistent mistrust of 'unpredictable Russia', as well as the fear of recommencement of the 'gas wars'. Correspondingly, Georgia's place in the inventory of means of mutual influence has shifted to periphery.

When Vladimir Putin declared in autumn 2008 that he would not talk to Mikheil Saakashvili (and added something else regarding what he was going to do to him), he locked Russia-Georgia relations within the limits of a certain configuration which reflected the post-August realities and was supposed to establish a new *status quo* in the simplest and painless way, instead of channeling all that into lengthy negotiations

and discussions, maybe even with someone else's mediation. The Russian leaders definitely needed some time to stabilize the situation (especially their international image) after the August crisis. The potential reaction of the Georgian side to Putin's and Medvedev's declarations was accurately predicted. The Georgian authorities also needed some stabilization period, so the scheme also worked to their advantage. Here, the so-called 'good chemistry' (Johan Galtung's term) again manifested itself, as the hostile rhetoric and demonstrative confrontation perfectly blend with the synchronous actions of the leaders in power trying to guarantee rear area for each other as well as for themselves.

The situation is the same at present, but the conditions and environment are totally different from those of post-August times. The international community, as well as the community of experts voice serious concerns regarding the prolonged silence of both parties. The international community is concerned about the absence of dialogue, which hinders the activity of international and interstate structures in many areas. This results in the increased risk of armed provocations and a sharp complication of the situation in the region, including the difficulties related to the implementation of large-scale international energy projects. Neither Abkhazia nor Ossetia can build their future only on the power of Russian military bases, vigilance of the border regime and maintenance of the bogey of external threat from the Georgian state. Now, even the authorities of the Russian Federation have to make gestures inviting to the dialogue, so that they do not look like the initiators of crisis and the generators of deadlocks in the world's eyes.<sup>6</sup> The only invariant in this picture is the line followed by the Georgian government, which constantly demands more activity from the international community to make Russia accountable for its past deeds and denies the possibility of 'leading any negotiations with the aggressor' as long as the 'occupation of Georgian territories' is going on. Most Georgian oppositional parties are hesitant to push dialogue because of the fear of marginalization, labeling and accusation of being unpatriotic.

An interesting conclusion can be drawn from the above. In spite of being a small country, Georgia generates the phenomenon of power that follows the pattern of big countries. The attributes of its governance system are even similar to those of superpowers. Gamsakhurdia's rule was the first example of what has been said above, but his style of governance did not and could not last long. Shevardnadze was a typical ruler of a small and poor developing country. On the whole, his ambitions corresponded to the resources actually accessible for the country, and sometimes even fell behind them. Finally, Saakashvili demonstrates the traits typical not only of an authoritarian leader, but also of a leader of a huge virtual power, the potential

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6 See e.g. declarations made by Medvedev, Lavrov and Karasin are an invitation to the dialogue, as well as Putin's comment made at the meeting with Nogaideli in winter 2010: 'Nothing is impossible when it comes to the Russia-Georgia issue.'

and resources of which are presented in an exaggerated form compared to reality. In spite of this, Saakashvili's team has found the right balance between the external and internal stabilizing factors, which makes it possible to minimize the criticism from the West (which was much louder in the past) regarding the unhealthy election system, lack of freedom in the mass media and the judiciary system and the weakness of democratic institutions. While skillfully applying PR technologies and media effects, the President's team creates an impression of economic dynamism and its own increasing popularity within the inner political space. As for the President, he still retains in the West the image of a bit eccentric yet progressive reformer, the type of reformer who is struggling, together with his team, with the difficult heritage of the post-soviet corrupt community deprived of privileges and incomes, as well as a pro-Russian Fifth Column represented by the bankrupt opposition and the retarded intelligentsia unhappy with the reforms.<sup>7</sup> The most difficult part of spin-doctoring is shaping, reinterpreting and amplifying any signals that are able to at least smoothen (if not to remove) in people's consciousness the feeling of insolubility of territorial problems, as well as of the problems related to the guarantees of safe and democratic development. But all this has been also manageable, so far.

### **The strategy of alienation**

Did the peaks in the last years' complication of Georgia-Russia relations result from purposeful actions or more or less spontaneous processes? Let us start from the chronologically first incident grown into a process with dramatic consequences.

Demonstrative deportation from Georgia of four Russian military servants under the accusation of espionage at the end of 2006 was bound to entail a furious reaction in Russia. There is a well substantiated opinion that this was done intentionally, to evoke exactly this kind of reaction. The policy of alienation from Russia, as a major direction in the state strategy, was considered by the Georgian leadership already in that period. The objective was to ensure mutual alienation between the countries. While it was relatively easy to intensify anti-Russian attitudes through propaganda and permanent demonstration of negative experience by the mass media within the small country, the accomplishment of the same task seemed to be a real problem in the super power which was not under your control. However, an unexpected and daring move, leading to a real breakthrough in this direction, would be public humiliation and derision of representatives of that part of Russian establishment who did not belong to the high echelon (using the same approach in relation to the latter could prove ineffective), and was, at the same time, respected by large segments of

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7 See a recent article in the British journal *The Economist*, Georgia's mental revolution: Seven years after the Rose revolution, Georgia has come a long way. August 19th, 2010.

the Russian public. The officer corps and peacekeeping forces belonged to that very category. It did not take Russia long to react in the expected and controllable way: a hysteric anti-Georgian campaign was launched and a huge number of Georgian economic migrants residing in Russia were deported in an extremely humiliating manner: they were flown back to Georgia on board Russian cargo aircrafts not suitable for the transportation of people, where it was impossible to sit or hold the grab-handle, not to mention the absence of necessary passenger safety means. A wave of humiliating checking and oppression of all the people of Georgian nationality passed over Russia. It even involved the schoolchildren and certainly encouraged the Russian *skinheads'* future 'heroic' actions towards the third world representatives.

Can the Russian reaction to the action of the Georgian government be considered disproportionate, ruthless or inhuman? Certainly yes. But, on the other hand, was this not the effect targeted by the whole preplanned operation? The Georgians who watched on TV how their compatriots were 'unloaded' from the cargo compartment of the plane and listened to their stories about the ethnic discrimination of their children in Russian schools, surely experienced the rising wave of indignation. As a result, the 'strategic' aim was achieved: antagonism against and alienation from Russia was lifted to a higher stage.

The Ganmukhuri incident (autumn 2007) that took place not far from Abkhazia's administrative border worked in the same direction. A representative of Georgian administration, accompanied by the local police and cameramen, got into conversation with the head of subdivision of Russian peacekeepers patrolling the area. You could not hear what they were talking about, because of the wind blowing and also because the initiator of the conversation was standing with his back to the camera. It was impossible to distinguish the words even after the repeated analysis of the video recording,<sup>8</sup> but what the viewers saw on the TV screen was the following: after a few quick remarks, the Russian military struck the Georgian man down, twisted his arms, and threatening to open the fire, started to shout to the others to move back. When, despite the warnings, the friends approached the lying man to render him help, the Russians used force also against the helpers; the Georgian policemen were disarmed and stranded. What happened a moment later, looked incredible at first sight: President Saakashvili, accompanied by a large group of people and TV cameras, appears on the stage, immediately expresses his protest against the use of force by the Russian military and declares the Commander of Peacekeeping Forces General Chaban *persona non grata*. The cameras are registering the bleeding wounds of Georgian policeman, and the whole incident turns into a top TV news for the following days.

The mechanism of indignation was put into motion: Georgian TV viewers did witness

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8 The Russian mass media claimed that the Georgian civil servant had threatened and insulted the Russian officer.

again how obtrusively the so-called Russian peacekeepers behaved on the Georgian land, and how they treated the representatives of legitimate national authorities. It did not matter in what direction the things would later develop. The informational event already took place and did its job. It was expected that as a result of all this a conditioned response would be formed in an average Georgian: any mentioning of Russia would be enough to inhibit the brain, as it happens at the sight of a cobra. This task was finally accomplished immediately after the August war. It was the finishing of the last touch in formation of the irrational, uncontrollable and irremovable external threat embodied by Russia. The five-day war itself served as a means to sober the population up. No one, to whom the Georgian statehood and national dignity meant something, could stay indifferent when hearing the Russian general's monotonous report about the ongoing destruction of the Poti port's infrastructure, or coolly watch the CNN coverage showing the Russian tanks drive over Georgian police vehicles exposed as barriers to the entrance of Gori. It is difficult to say what we had more on the strategic level – informational war or informational cooperation.

After the isolation is achieved and antagonism is established in people's minds, it becomes easier to control the situation. When, at the beginning of 2010, the Moscow experts, that were close to Russia's ruling circles, decided to make a proactive step and arrived at the Tbilisi airport without preliminary consultations, they were not let into the country. The explanation was that two persons in the group were connected to the Russian secret service.<sup>9</sup> In fact, another obstacle to prevent the dialogue was created by this action. If they had let the Russian experts in, irrespective of the character of the meetings and discussions, the Georgian mass media would have interviewed the meeting participants, and the Russian-Georgian discourse might get a chance to perk up. However, that kind of development could not be allowed.

The strategic aim seemed to have been achieved, any contacts were tabooed, and the public was held in the state of prescribed anxious expectation of unpredictable future. However, 'someone' was still concerned and wanted to make sure that the achieved alienation level was really irreversible. The Imedi TV main news program 'the Chronicle' shown at 8 p.m. of March 13, 2010 served just this purpose of testing the status of mass consciousness and, at the same time, shaking it up<sup>10</sup>. The simulated Chronicle reported, in the form of real-time sensational news, about Russia's new invasion of Georgia, escape of the authorities and the change of government in Tbilisi (thus, the Chronicle was 'completing' the events that Russians were not able to complete in August 2008). It also reiterated the names of the opposition leaders brought

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9 Before that there were cases of non-issuance of visas and refusal to enter the country, but these were individual cases which did not attract the attention of public or press.

10 *Chronicle* is the daily evening news program on the pro-government TV channel Imedi, previously owned by Badri Patarkatsishvili.

to power that were rendered to be Moscow's appointees. It was only later announced that all that was simulation and apologies were made. But people were psychologically traumatized; some had heart attacks (one person even died). Georgian public had a feeling of protest and indignation, but the agitation shortly subsided without any consequences for the organizers of the program.

Under the pressure of the changed international context, the Georgian authorities have recently started talking about their readiness for the dialogue with Moscow, but in parallel, some events are taking place that freeze the situation in its previous condition. We can hear another remote, but not a final chord of alienation in the form of already written and presented historical work about the *two-hundred year old occupation* of Georgia by Russia, which is to be used in the school educational process. Even the fact that the large-scale Russian spy network in Georgia was disclosed on November 5 (the so-called *Enver* operation), when Russia celebrated the day of a Scout, was not a mere coincidence. Rustavi 2 and Imedi were happy to declare emphatically that Moscow was too shocked to have any kind of celebration that day.

An overt starting point of substantiation for the action of Georgian leaders is that the aggressor may consider to have achieved its goals and not care at all about Georgia's reaction to it, but we have moral right to resist and fight, even in the form of an undeclared guerilla war action if necessary. Translated to reality, and judging from the enormous disproportion of forces and capacities to harm each other, this substantiation fails to evoke anything but justification of permanent homeland emergency state by a permanent external threat. At the same time, the government itself feels free to unilaterally open the border with the turbulent Russian North Caucasus region.

And still, merely out of a habit to look for a rational seed in any actions, I'd like to mention some other motivation for the alienation policy. There were some apprehensions in the Georgian political discourse of the post-soviet period that the issues of NATO and EU would gradually lose their momentum, America would also lose its interest in Georgia, the pendulum would swing in the opposite direction, and the new shift in government would prefer to abandon antagonism and do something contrary to what was happening before, i.e. to sell to Russia with 'giblets', and see immediate gains for themselves. Such apprehensions also rest on the possibility that many compatriots might yield to such changes<sup>11</sup>, if these changes are introduced through an intelligently carried out PR campaign, and, especially, during an economic decline. Georgia, a formally independent country, might become Russia's vassal again, but this time, on its own initiative. It can be said without hesitation that such a possibility does not make happy most part of the Georgian public. There are some expectations that the West might finally turn its back on Georgia; at the same time, Russia is far

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11 You can sometimes hear in private conversations: 'Where can we possibly go from each other? Presidents may come and go, but geography does not go anywhere.'

from being a European-style democratic state under the auspices of which Georgians could feel secure and free. Expectation of numerous Georgians is in that Russia uses the improved relations with Georgia against the latter's national interests. That is why alienation policy is perceived by many as a preventive remedy (always useful when you apply the right dose) not to let the future leaders of Georgia play dangerous games with orientation changes. The essence of the problem, however, is that the dose of this 'remedy' has already exceeded any conceivable amount and might easily become lethal.

### **Instead of conclusion**

Power phenomena formed in the post-soviet space interact with each other and create a complex pattern of interrelations, which is in the state of unstable, dynamic equilibrium. Outcomes are more important than who has what on their mind (especially given the fact that we all know where the road paved with good intentions leads). What we see as a result is that Russia implements its long-term geo-strategic interests in the Caucasus with the help of current Georgian leaders' policy, which it finds quite suitable. One of the latest signs is the Georgian government's almost simultaneous decision to unilaterally open the borders for visa-free regime with the North Caucasus republics and autonomies (i.e. border territories of the country, with which, according to their declaration, the war is not finished yet), and also bilaterally open borders with Iran (the country which causes serious problems to Georgia's strategic partners – US and EU).

It is difficult to imagine who would welcome such a decision in the US. But Moscow is something different. If we imagine for a moment that Tbilisi makes decisions in favor of Moscow, many things that look awkward and illogical, become rational and convincing. But even such a daring assumption is not able to answer all the questions and explain what actually involves emotions, ambitions, patterns of thinking, peculiarities of character, and many other things.

At present, the situation looks as follows: The balance around the distribution of roles has become more or less stable on the international level. From the point of view of external observer, the situation in Georgia can be assessed as stable, despite the presence of Russian troops and military equipment in 40 miles from Tbilisi. The freezing of Georgia-Russia relations is tolerable in terms of international stability and some unexpected aggravations are not likely to take place. The opposition in Russia and Georgia is weak and controllable, as well as the mass media, and the activity level of civil society groups is much lower than before. Sporadic attempts of radical oppositional forces to 'revitalize' the country's political life do not bring any tangible changes. It is expected, anyway, that the situation will be more lively and even more complex in both countries in a couple of years, with the approaching

parliamentary and presidential elections. So, Europe can take its time and deal with the priority issues until then.

Irrespective of how the situation is assessed by the external world and what opinions exist within the country, the Georgian state-controlled mass media sticks to the virtual picture, according to which (a) The essence of the Russian state is such that it is impossible to hold negotiations with it, since Russia's goal is not so much imperial dominance, as full annihilation of disobedient small states like Georgia; (b) The world is divided into countries and alliances, which either reject this thesis or agree with it, and of course, we should stay with those who agree; and finally (c) Processes that ripen within Russia - basically those in the North Caucasus - will undermine the country. You just have to wait for the time when Russia starts to collapse... and then, after losing the main supporter of separatism, Abkhazia and South Ossetia will prefer to join Georgia.

Although it is immediately visible how artificial and counterproductive such a virtual picture is, but there still are people in Georgia who believe in it. As they say, blessed are those who believe.

*Andrey Piontkovsky*

## **Will the Russian Federation Survive Until 2014?**

*“I find it hard to explain why any internal degeneration is invariably accompanied by over-ambitious foreign policies. Perhaps an escape from internal contradictions is being sought in external crises. Perhaps, on the contrary, the ease with which all internal opposition is crushed creates a delusion of omnipotence. Perhaps the need to have an external enemy for domestic political purposes creates an unstoppable momentum, especially since every totalitarian regime degenerates without being aware of the fact.”*

*Andrei Amalrik. Will the USSR Survive until 1984?*

On August 11, 2008 Moscow was on the crest of a wave after its major military and grandiose propaganda successes. Thanks to the Georgian raid into Tskhinvali the Kremlin had either achieved or was close to achieving all the aims it had for August 2008: weakening Saakashvili or removing him from power; consolidating the de facto independence/annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; humiliating ‘Comrade Wolf’<sup>1</sup>; causing a split in the wolf pack; and dramatically raising its own international standing.

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1 Reference to Vladimir Putin’s paraphrase of a fairy tale containing the words “Comrade Wolf knows better who to eat”. This was said with regard to the U.S. policies in the world (Eds.)

The thuggish stupidities which since then, under pressure from nutters in the state apparatus, egged on by mass patriotic fever, were perpetrated and continue to be perpetrated not only cancel out these “achievements” but, as the patriarch of Soviet and Russian diplomacy, Anatoly Adamishin (gazeta.ru, August 23rd) has rightly warned, will have catastrophic long-term consequences. Soured relations with the West and possible sanctions from that quarter are the least of Russia’s worries.

Nobody in the Kremlin is scared of the West. Indeed they openly and, to a large extent rightly, despise it. How could it be otherwise when its Chancellors and Prime Ministers are queueing up to serve as attendants at Putin’s gas stations?

As was admirably expressed by a “highly placed source” (Kommersant, August 29, 2008), “Any toothless resolution on September 1st will be a victory for us. The view is that if we can steamroller the West, the game will be played by our rules from now on.” Seventy years ago this, almost word for word, was the thinking in the German Imperial Chancellery.

The fearsome threat of a West, creeping up and dismembering Orthodox Rus even as she is getting up off her knees, is something the ruling kleptocracy in the Kremlin needs solely for domestic consumption. Those at the top believe in no such threat or they would never risk incessantly vilifying and insulting the West as they do. They will suffer no consequences, and are well aware of the fact. They long ago safely diversified their bank accounts, and if the West should ever impose a financial crackdown, the only people to suffer will be a dozen oligarchs who are not in the Brigade’s inner circle.

Any overt geopolitical clash with the West will be steamrolled through by the men in the Kremlin, despite the West’s colossal economic and considerable military superiority.

They will overcome by their brazen impudence. “What schoolboy is a match for a street-fighter?” Especially one threatening him with a nuclear crowbar.

If Russia confronted one-to-one the West, Messrs Putin, Prokhanov, and Dugin would have created their Fifth Empire. The West will not die for modern Dantsigs.

Indeed, if Hitler had been fighting one-to-one against the West he would have built his Third Reich, despite the fact that the leaders of the time were Churchill and Roosevelt, and not a bunch of Chamberlains and Sarkozys.

A year ago a popular program was shown on ‘Ekho Moskv’ called “Hitler’s main mistake”. There was one fundamental mistake in the German Reich Chancellor’s calculations, and the name of that mistake was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics - a state with an entirely different mentality and traditions from the West.

The mistake which our home-grown imperialists are making is even more

monumental, and it is called the People's Republic of China.

Ask yourself, for example, whether any "highly placed source" could have stated, "If we can steamroller China, the game will be played by our rules from now on." They would not dare even to think along those lines. The highly placed sources sense in their guts (which is the part of their body they think with) where sordid little oil and gas traders can shoot their mouths off about snot-noses, shit-houses, and circumcisions, and where they just need to put their tail between their legs and not even question large-scale military maneuvers along Russia's borders.

There is a remarkable entity known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization which Russia set up to "combat a unipolar world." In fact, however, it has proved an ideal vehicle for furthering China's ambition to swallow up the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, both economically and geopolitically, in the medium term. In the past two weeks that medium-term perspective has become a short-term prospect.

Mr D. Medvedev has evidently not yet woken up to what happened in Dushanbe on August 28th, or to what it that he was signed there. What he signed was, however, in essence a guaranteeing by the People's Republic of China of the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan and the other countries of Central Asia which are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

It is a highly topical document, because two days previously, on August 26th, the state borders of all 12 countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States had their legitimacy destroyed. With the unanimous agreement of the USSR's successor states, these former internal administrative dividing lines of the Soviet Union were transformed into state borders in December 1991. On August 26, 2008 one of those 12 countries unilaterally tore up that agreement.

Very few Russian "patriots" failed to start talking at this point about the future of the Crimea and North Kazakhstan. But the post-26 August situation applies, incidentally, in full measure to the borders of the Russian Federation itself and a number of its national enclaves, as the separatist movements which exist there were quick to point out.

If we recall one further elegant Putin-Medvedev doctrine regarding their right to employ military means to protect citizens with Russian passports, no matter where they may be located, then a solid legal grounding would seem to have been provided for the future annexation of Russia's Far Eastern provinces. The Chinese will not even have to issue passports, since their citizens there already have them.

And finally, last but not least it has become a commonplace in American foreign policy discourse these days to talk about the need for "consultations with our allies and with China" on matters of policy relating to Russia. The West is certainly going to need China now.

The setting up of a strategic alliance between the USA and China gained significant impetus in August. The re-run of Nixon-Mao-72 is being played out live before our very eyes.

As for Russia's future relationship with its former neighbors from the shared apartment (including Georgia), let us try to realize some currently important facts within the observable historical context.

The Russian Empire fell apart twice. This first happened in 1917. Anton Denikin and the majority of educated Russians perceived this fact as a national catastrophe. They sincerely believed that Ukraine was a part of Great Russia, along with the Caucasus, Baltic countries and, may be, Finland and Poland. It is not accidental that the main slogan of that period was 'For unified and indivisible Russia'. Honor and adherence to this idea did not allow the Whites to enter into a compromise with other movements on the territory of the Russian Empire who did not share their ideas. They would not make a compromise even for the sake of victory over the Bolsheviks.

Such a position truly deserves deep respect and has to be remembered by those people's descendants in Russia. Nevertheless, it had one weakness. It was not shared by Ukrainians, Caucasian or Baltic peoples i.e. had no supporters among non-Russians living on the territory of Russia. They could tolerate this idea, but it was never exciting, would never make them fight or die to defend it. The idea of Great Russia just was not able to do so. Despite being a trivial truth, it usually takes the 'title' nations in the former empires a lot of time to realize it.

Inability to understand this kind of truth was one of the reasons for the defeat of the white movement. The red movement that made any kinds of promises to everyone and entered any tactical alliances, won.

After beating Denikin and other white generals, Bolsheviks implemented his program ('unified and indivisible Russia') by almost totally restoring the Russian Empire. How did this miracle happen and why can't it happen today?

It is because Lenin and his comrades never tried to impose the totally alien and empty idea of Great Russia on the peoples of the former Russian Empire (At least, they did not do it openly). They were offered an inspiring communist idea of social justice and liberation of oppressed workers. The Red Army carried this idea on its swords and its commissars disseminated it through propaganda. It does not at all matter that the idea turned out to be false and its implementation - the real crime. This was discovered much later. But in that period, it attracted millions of people irrespective of their nationality. It was not a quasi-religious idea. It became a new religion.

Genial Andrey Amalrik, who already at the end of the 1960s predicted the disintegration of the USSR, was absolutely right when he said that just like the adoption of Christianity prolonged the existence of the Roman Empire for 300 years, so the

adoption of communism prolonged the existence of the Russian Empire for several decades. The USSR could have fallen apart much earlier, following this or that scenario (e.g. Yugoslavian), but when the communist religion died in the hearts of its priests first, and then in the hearts of its congregation, the Soviet theocratic empire was doomed to death.

What can the modern Russian 'elite' offer its neighbors from the shared apartment? Nothing except for the pompous talks about its grandeur, historical mission, messianic imperial mission of the Russian ethnos, etc. But this does not interest anyone, except for the Russians. The only thing others can do is to listen indulgently to these delirious ideas for big financial subsidies.

If the Russian elite, suffocating from its hatred for the West, proposed a consistent, Big Anti-Western Ideological Project, it could find socially close likeminded people in the post-soviet space. However, everyone knows where these elite keep its treasures.

Each new leader in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Georgia is called to be pro-western or 'even more pro-western'. We don't even realize that by making such declarations we actually bring in a verdict on our own policy. Where are the 'pro-Russians' we are waiting for while building sand castles of our new empire? May be something is wrong with us or our policy, and our presidents are just pro-Ukrainian, pro-Russian or pro-Belorussian?

Inability of the Russian political class to accept internally, psychologically, rather than formally, the independence of the Commonwealth of Independent States, its amazing deafness to the partners' potential reaction, spiritual laziness which prevents it from looking at oneself through their eyes, results in the self-developing cycle of hostility and alienation in the entire post-Soviet space.

Denikin's tragedy is repeated today in the form of farce with Putins and Medvedevs.

The thievish and untalented, arrogant and cowardly Russian political 'elite' that rushes between Kurshevel and Lefortovo finds it impossible to understand that no one needs it in the role of a teacher (who tells you how to live) or the gravity center in the post-Soviet space.

Other gravity centers seem to be much more attractive for our neighbors. Ukraine, Moldova and the Caucasian Countries see their future in the Euro-Atlantic political space. The charismatic 'batka' would gladly dash there too, but he understands quite well that his only chance in the entire Big Europe is Hague. As for Georgia, the war in 2008 and the annexation of its territories made its choice in favor of Europe final and irreversible.

In parallel, Central Asia is gradually becoming the 'near abroad' for China which is gaining economic power.

Today, the Russian political class is experiencing a severe geopolitical split, even more severe than in 1991. That time it seemed to be temporary; today we see that it will last forever. The words ‘near abroad’ have lost their encouraging ambivalent meaning. ‘China’s near abroad’ is a new combination of words, which is being carefully tasted and tried on by Russia’s political ‘elite’, united by uncontrollable hatred for the West.

Confrontation with the West and orientation towards ‘strategic partnership’ with China will lead to Russia’s marginalization, its action in compliance with the strategic interests of China and the loss of control over the Far East and Siberia, first *de facto* and then *de jure*.

The sacred Asiopian alliance between Emperors Pu and Hu is an alliance between the rabbit and the boa. It will soon lead to a final and complete ‘huisation’ of our little Pu<sup>2</sup> and of all of us together with him. We have not noticed that we are already transforming into China’s near abroad while trying hard to gather some Bagapsh and Kokoity type vassals in ‘our near abroad’.

A strong desire to belong to something Big and Eurasian might result in an unexpected but logical end.

Panmongolism - a wild, wild word,

But sweet it falls upon mine ear.

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2 Hardly translatable wordplays. ‘Asiopa’ has been Grigory Yavlinsky’s ridicule of Eurasia. The next part ridicules the alleged Russian and Chinese leaders’ alliance (*Ed.*)



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