**National Identity and Foreign Policy Behavior: the Interplay between
Russia and Georgia**

by

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**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts

Institute of European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario**

May 2009

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ISBN: 978-0-494-52021-5
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-52021-5

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ABSTRACT

The central argument of this thesis is that national identity is a key and potent factor in how Russia and Georgia pursue their foreign policies. Theoretical discussions based on nation, nationalism, and ethnic myths are used to situate national identity within a historical context, explaining the Imperial, Soviet and Post-Soviet relationship between Russia and Georgia. The national identities of Russia and Georgia, neoimperialism and resistance identity, are in opposition with one another, affecting their foreign policy orientations. Theoretically, Critical Geopolitics and the National Identity Dynamic are used to explain this. Russia's foreign policy is described as Official Eurasianism, while Georgia's foreign policy is predicated on its desire to join the community of western nations. Georgia's potential for NATO membership is an important point of contention between the two countries, and was a major factor in Russia and Georgia going to war in August 2008, which is extensively discussed in this work.

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been quite the process, consisting of late nights, early mornings, and being barricaded by books, articles and a particularly large Russian-English dictionary. It was often a frustrating process, but most of all, it was a rewarding experience, which would not have been possible without the support, wisdom and help of some very important people.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Piotr Dutkiewicz for sharing his knowledge of Soviet and post-Soviet space with me, for forcing me to continue to refine and narrow down the scope of my ideas into a workable topic, for his enthusiasm when I finally did that and for his support during the research, writing and revision processes. It was an honor to work with a scholar of such a high caliber.

I would also like to thank Professor Jeff Sahadeo, who has been a mentor to me since the third year of my undergrad. It was while working on my Honor's Paper, with him as my supervisor, that I fell in love with studying Georgia. He was also the one who encouraged me to pursue an M.A. in EURUS, which has been such a fulfilling experience. I would also like to thank him for the painstakingly detailed comments and tips that he provided as I was writing.

My family and friends were also an important part of this endeavor. I would like to thank my roommate and dear friend, David Simao, for putting up with me when I was going crazy, and for always having *Golden Girls* ready when I needed to take a break. My sister, Gina Broitman-Maduro, and brother-in-law, Morris Maduro provided me with so much useful advice about the process of writing a thesis, and how to prepare for the defense. I am grateful to my fiancé, Denis Levandovsky for his unwavering belief in my ability to pull this off, for editing all of my papers and for supporting me in all my decisions. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Len and Lena Broitman, who taught me the value of education and hard work, and who always encouraged me to go the extra mile. Their love and support has meant the world. It is to them that I dedicate this work.

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Figure 1: Map of Georgia¹

¹ “Political Map of Georgia,” http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/georgia_map2.htm

Introduction

The National Identity and Foreign Policy Dynamic

The key to the future lies in what a people select from its past, how it imagines itself as a community and continues to remake itself as a nation.

—Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*

Both Russia and Georgia are countries with long and rich histories that have become very interconnected and intertwined, largely from their Imperial and Soviet pasts. In this thesis, I argue that national identity is a key factor in determining foreign policy behavior. National identity, for both Russia and Georgia, is impossible to separate from history, but even more so, it is impossible to separate from what each country chooses to focus upon within its history. Selection and interpretation of history, used to bolster national identity, greatly affects how each country orients its foreign policy; foreign policy, in turn, is very much about protecting national interests, and projecting them onto an international scale.

To this end, this body of research is broken into three chapters. The first chapter deals explicitly with Georgian and Russian national identity formation. Theoretical discussions about nationhood and nationalism will be used to explain the development of national identity in both Russia and Georgia. The nation is defined as a group that possesses a name, common history and culture. The group is joined together by common myths, memories, symbols of culture, as well as an association with a particular territory.² Nationalism is the ideological movement that seeks to achieve and maintain autonomy, unity and identity for a group that believes itself to be a nation. It is often

² Anthony D. Smith, "The Origins of Nations," in *Becoming National*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 113; Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: the Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 16.

ethnic in character.³ The importance of this lies in the fact that this movement is based around protecting and preserving group autonomy and identity, which is achieved through foreign policy. Both Russia and Georgia are inherently nationalistic: their autonomy and identity are linked through foreign policy. In Russia, autonomy is based around the idea of *derzhava*, or great power status. This idea is intimately associated with empire. In Georgia, autonomy is connected to independence.

I will also delve into the importance of ethnic myths and their role in national identity formation, as they represent an important element of nationalist rhetoric. Ethnic myths give the group a territorial framework; a strong sense of kinship and community; a prototype of virtue and heroism in an epoch of liberation from foreign invasions (the golden age); an explanation for group decline; and a model for group regeneration, which is the very core of nationalism. Regeneration harkens back to the golden age to glean those elements that will bring the group to a new golden age.⁴ To this end, history will play an important descriptive and analytical role. The Romantic Period is an especially crucial period in the crystallization of Russian and Georgian identities, and the interaction between the two within that framework show important elements of group nationalism. As such, what each group chooses to focus upon from its history and mythology is a crucial factor in how each country wishes to portray itself, and to be viewed by the international community.

Through foreign policy, leaders are able to create the necessary framework for the nation to reclaim its lost glory, and to usher in a new golden age. To that end, the master

³ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). 256; Anthony D. Smith, *Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge, Polity Press: 2004), 245; Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 16.

⁴ Smith, *Myths and Memories of Nation*, 63-68; Smith, *Antiquity of Nations* 211-214.

myths, that is, the guiding principles, driving Russia and Georgia are interlinked with the nationalist goals of each country. Directly related to this is the concept of what Ghia Nodia calls the National Project, which is a “normative idea expressing the nature of the public order that state institutions are expected to define and protect, as well as defining whose institutions they are. Understanding this project lies at the heart of what is usually meant by ‘the national interest.’”⁵ The National Project is an important element of the relationship between national identity and foreign policy behavior because it is defined by national interests. National identity plays an important role in defining these interests, which are then projected into foreign policy.

Building upon this, the second chapter looks at the foreign policy that each country pursues, and how national identity is evident in this. Foreign policy depends upon a shared sense of national identity, which in turn, determines other important issues, such as what states are viewed as friends or enemies, what the national interests are, and what the aspirations of the state are. These concepts are largely determined by history and myth, as is explained in Chapter One.⁶ The notion that identity is an intermediary variable, a filter, between reality and state behavior is crucial for this thesis. It is the key tenant of “critical geopolitics,” a theory proposed by Henk Houweling and Mehdi Parvizi Amineh. Within the framework of critical geopolitics is the idea of states, which act as “power projectors.” These actors act outside of their legal territory, with the goal of affecting the world order, and are laden with ideological assumptions.⁷

⁵ Ghia Nodia, “Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity,” in *Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, eds. Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2005), 41.

⁶ Christopher Hill and William Wallace, “Introduction: actors and actions,” in *The Actors in Europe’s Foreign Policy*, ed. Christopher Hill (London: Routledge, 1996), 8.

⁷ Henk Houweling and Mehdi Parvizi Amineh, “Introduction: The Crisis in IR-Theory: Towards a Critical Geopolitics Approach,” in *Central Eurasia in Global Politics: Conflicts, Security and Development*, eds. Mehdi Parvizi Amineh and Henk Houweling (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 9-11, 16.

Another important dimension of the relationship between national identity and foreign policy is explained via William Bloom's concept of the National Identity Dynamic, which describes identity as a function of three factors: the mass national public, government foreign policy and how the nation understands its relationship with the larger community of nations. Mass sentiment can be manipulated, triggered and appropriated by the government; likewise, the government can be influenced by the mass national public. Bloom concludes that policies, which appear threatening to national identity, will elicit a negative response from the national public, while policies that enhance national identity will receive a positive response.⁸

With these theories and the identity constructs established in Chapter One, in the second chapter I will analyze key speeches and foreign policy documents to establish the relationship between these factors. Russian foreign policy and its inherently neoimperial ideals will be explained within the framework of "Official Eurasianism."⁹ This model makes key assumptions about Russia's role in regional politics, which is intrinsically tied to Russia's international role. All of these ideas are built upon a notion that is central to Eurasianism, which is Russia being a distinct culture, neither East nor West, with a stabilizing role as a bridge state between the two. In order to maintain this equilibrium, Russia must retain *derzhava*, or great power status. This, in turn, is directly impacted by

⁸ William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), 79-80.

⁹ The Term Official Eurasianism is used by Graham Smith: "The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift and the New Eurasianism," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series* 24, no. 4 (1999). Astrid Tuminez, "Russian Nationalism and the National Interest in Russian Foreign Policy," in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, ed. Celeste A. Wallander, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996) uses the term "Statist Nationalism." James Richter, "Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity," in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, ed. Celeste A. Wallander, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996) is more general, and simply uses the terms "Statist." Despite the difference in names, all of these terms describe the same ideas. Because Eurasianism heavily influences the ideas of statism, for the purpose of clarity, I will employ Graham's terminology of Official Eurasianism.

re-integration with the Near Abroad (the post-Soviet states), so Russia can reacquire its historical borders.¹⁰ As it pertains to the manifestation of resistance identity in Georgian foreign policy, three main factors emerge as crucial to the project of joining the west: independence, ensuring territorial integrity and Euro-Atlantic integration. As it is written in the introduction to the *National Security Concept of Georgia*:

Georgia is at an important stage in its centuries old history. Georgia regained its independence in 1991, after seven decades of occupation. Since then, it has undergone a period characterized by internal conflicts supported from outside Georgia, and by political and economic instability...The Rose Revolution of November 2003 once again demonstrated that democracy and liberty are part of Georgian traditional values. Georgia, as an integral part of the European political, economic and cultural area, whose fundamental national values are rooted in European values and traditions, aspires to achieve full-fledged integration into Europe's political, economic and security systems.¹¹

The disparity between the key goals of Russian and Georgian foreign policies is quite evident through the analysis of speeches and key foreign policy documents. Having established this, I will then proceed to analyze the practical implications of this using NATO enlargement as a case study. I will focus on the reasons why Russia is opposed to this, why Georgia desires it, and what effect this has had on their relationship, particularly Russia's actions as the relationship between Georgia and NATO became closer. The NATO case study is also an important element of what is discussed in Chapter Three.

¹⁰ Andrei P. Tsygankov, "From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism: the Foreign Policy Discourse of Contemporary Russia," *Mershon International Studies Review* 41, no. 2 (1997): 247-268; Alexander Sergunin, "Discussions of international relations in post-communist Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 37, no. 1 (March 2004): 19-35; Tatyana A. Shakleyina and Aleksei D. Bogaturov, "The Russian realist school of international relations," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 37, no. 1 (March 2004): 37-51; Eduard G. Solovyev, "Geopolitics in Russia—science or vocation?" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 37, no. 1 (March 2004): 85-96.

¹¹ Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *National Security Concept of Georgia*, http://www.mfa.gov.ge/?sec_id=24&lang_id=ENG

The final chapter builds on both chapters one and two, and explores the war that occurred between Russia and Georgia—the events leading up to it, the war itself, and its aftermath. It is an examination of both national identity and foreign policy, brought together in a final case study. As Alexander Wendt posited, states treat their friends differently than they do their enemies. This is because identity is a crucial filter through which foreign policy discourse and behavior is formulated.¹² Building on this idea, I will examine the implications of this: namely, that Russia and Georgia became embroiled in a security dilemma. The security dilemma contains key concepts for describing the war between Russia and Georgia; for instance, the advantage of offense versus defense, as described by Robert Jervis and Stephen van Evera.¹³ This notion describes why Russia took an offensive stance during the military operation.

The action-reaction dynamic is another crucial element in assessing what occurred between Russia and Georgia in August 2008. Both countries engaged in provocative measures against each other, which ultimately led Georgia to attempt a pre-emptive strike, which is a direct desire to break out of the action-reaction dynamic.¹⁴ Believing that Russia would attack first, Georgia launched its attack; unfortunately, Georgia fell into a Russian trap. The reason for this is best explained via Paul Roe's concept of a societal security dilemma. Group behavior is dictated by dominant identity constructions, which are important in terms of their foreign policy implications. Societal security involves protecting this identity from challenges, which are often related to

¹² Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it," *International Organizations* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 396-397.

¹³ Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 187; Stephen van Evera, "Offense, Defense and the Causes of War," *International Security* 22, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 8-9

¹⁴ Paul Roe, *Ethnic Violence and the Societal Security Dilemma* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 14.

political autonomy and territorial integrity.¹⁵ Georgia's attempt to protect societal security in terms of the country's political autonomy and territorial integrity in the face of Russian attempts to dictate these concepts is an important explanatory tool to describe the hostilities, which occurred this past summer. Therefore, in this chapter I argue that Georgia acted impulsively, fell into a Russian trap, and allowed Russia the necessary conditions to legitimize recognizing the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Particularly the first and second chapters are built around key terms and concepts that inform the entire premise of this work. As such, I feel it prudent to engage with them and provide definitions within the confines of the introduction, so that the subsequent information in the following chapters is clear. For each Russia and Georgia, a discussion of national identity and foreign policy paradigm is necessary. First I will define Russia's national identity discourse, which I argue is guided by neoimperialism. I will then explain Georgia's national identity conception, which is based on "resistance identity." Following that, I will define the basic premise of Russia's foreign policy orientation, which is best encapsulated by Official Eurasianism. Georgia's foreign policy, predicated upon joining the west, will then be explained. The information presented here is meant to serve as an introduction to the concepts. More in depth information will be addressed in the chapters.

¹⁵ Roe, *Ethnic Violence*, 46-51.

National Identity Constructs

Defining Neoimperialism

In this section, I will look at how several authors have grappled with the term neoimperial, and synthesize their arguments to provide a definition for the term. The first author I will examine is Celeste Wallander, most notably her article, “Russian Transimperialism and its Implications.” Next, I will examine Uri Ra’anan’s chapter in *Russia: a Return to Imperialism*, entitled “Imperial Elements in Russia’s Doctrines and Operation.” Finally, I will look at Ingmar Oldber’s chapter, “Great Power Ambitions under Putin,” in *Russia: Re-emerging Great Power*.

Wallander’s approach to neoimperialism encompasses very important elements to define the term, but ironically Wallander does not believe that neoimperialism entirely describes Russia’s behavior. She presents her own term, “transimperialism,”¹⁶ as an explanatory tool, but it casts aside very important elements of neoimperialism, which I believe are crucial to understanding Russian national identity; this is why I will not employ the term transimperial, but will rather continue to use neoimperial. Neoimperialism ultimately explains the way in which Russia seeks to establish an

¹⁶ Wallander describes transimperialism as being based upon patrimonial authoritarianism in Russia. This view encompasses the belief that patron-client relationships, based on the centralization of power in the hands of an elite that is not responsible to the whole of society, guides Russian behavior. According to Wallander, transimperialism is patrimonial authoritarianism extended to the global level. Russia is only interested in participating in the international community if the relationship can be managed by the Russian government in conjunction with corrupt elites in partner countries. Wallander describes transimperialism as a type of geopolitical behavior, but it is dictated by commercial relationships and the extension of patron-client relations to the international level. While Wallander does not believe that neoimperialism adequately describes the situation in Georgia, I do not believe that transimperialism on its own is enough to describe Russian behavior. It is my belief that neoimperialism encompasses elements of transimperialism, insofar as economic considerations are very important to a neoimperial Russia, but because all the other elements listed as neoimperial are absent from this definition, it is not sufficient. As such, I will incorporate economic considerations into my framework for neoimperialism.

informal empire to facilitate its emergence as a great power in world affairs. As such, Russia determines security issues in terms of having control or leverage over the domestic and foreign policies of weaker states. Furthermore, a neoimperial Russia is concerned with and actively seeks to reverse the economic and political integration of Eurasia into the Euro-Atlantic community. Also, security in relation to other countries is viewed in a zero sum manner. Geopolitics and Eurasianist thought, as well as Russian nationalism, play an important role in neoimperialist Russia. As she further elucidates:

This neoimperial Russia would seek wealth, power and security through a position of strength vis-à-vis the West...by exercising power over dependent neo-colonies, primarily focused on zero-sum competition with the United States, but also potentially with regional competitors.¹⁷

Ingmar Oldberg, like Wallander, also focuses on the importance of great power status to describe Russian behavior. The Russian leadership is very adamant that Russia was, is and will remain a great power in world affairs. This great power status is achieved primarily in relation to the former Soviet republics, particularly those who are now members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). For Russia, the CIS is within Russia's sphere of influence, as close neighbors who share a very deep historical relationship.¹⁸

Lastly, Uri Ra'anani offers a succinct definition of neoimperialism as "an assertion of domination over countries that the successor to the former imperial power and the international community have recognized as independent and sovereign...[and] by the

¹⁷ Celeste Wallander, "Russian Transimperialism and Its Implication." *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 113.

¹⁸ Ingmar Oldberg, "Great Power Ambitions Under Putin," in *Russia: Re-Emerging Great Power*, ed. Roger E. Kanet (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 25-27.

imposition of that domination by force or the threat of force...”¹⁹ While Ra’anan’s chapter focuses on the early Yeltsin years, the criteria he lays out for determining Russia’s neoimperialist aspirations are very relevant to the present situation. For instance, an important preoccupation of the Yeltsin regime was the fate of Russians who were now living outside of Russia’s borders; thus, a military doctrine emerged in 1992 that outlined a potential cause of war for Russia was the violation of rights of people who identity as Russian. What constituted a violation of these rights was never fully defined. Within this larger framework, another indication of Russia’s neoimperial behavior was attempting to force the newly independent former republics to allow dual citizenship with Russia. The Foreign Minister at the time, Andrei Kozyrev stated: “If a Russian, an ethnic Russian, or a Russian speaker, someone who feels close to Russia...if all these people, or some of them, wish to have Russian citizenship as well as [other] citizenship, of course they will be under the protection of the Russian state...”²⁰

The last major indicator Ra’anan discusses is Russia’s monopoly on peacekeeping activities in the Near Abroad. For Russia, it was not, and still remains, unacceptable to simply leave the traditional zones of influence, which took centuries to establish. Peacekeeping mandates became a means to continue to influence the internal and external politics of their neighbors, however they used the CIS peacekeepers to achieve their aims, and still appear respectable and impartial. When these mandates were established, there were clear international rules for engagement: (1) Russia required to have the permission of the country before they deployed troops; (2) Peacekeepers were expected to remain neutral and not support separatist tendencies in these countries. There was a clear

¹⁹ Uri Ra’anan, “Imperial Elements in Russia’s Doctrines and Operations,” in *Russia: a Return to Imperialism?* Eds. Uri Ra’anan and Kate Martin (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 19.

²⁰ Andrei Kozyrev quoted in Uri Ra’anan, “Imperial Elements in Russia’s Doctrines and Operations,” 22.

expectation that territorial sovereignty would be respected; (3) Russian peacekeepers were expected to behave in a manner that upheld principles of the both the UN Charter and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); (4) the Russian peacekeeping mandate had to be sanctioned by a UN Security Council resolution; (5) lastly, within the CIS forces, Russian troops could only account for 20-30% of the peacekeepers on the ground. These basic principles are scarcely upheld. Russia completely dictates the CIS: for instance, soldiers do not pledge allegiance to the CIS and their home country, they pledge allegiance to Russia and their home country.²¹

There are those who believe that Russia has renounced the ideology of imperialism and that the country is in a post-imperial identity construct. The basic premise of post-imperialism is that Russia is guided primarily by economic concerns. For instance, a key proponent of post-imperial thinking, Dmitri Trenin, likens Russia to a super-corporation, whose primary concern is Russia itself. He writes: "It's nothing personal, it's business."²² He elaborates, stating that Russia is not interested in world domination, or a restoration of its former empire. Russia government officials will also state this, such as Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who insists that Russian "renounced an ideology of imperial and other "great plans" in favor of pragmatism and common sense."²³ This post-imperial Russia would seek its economic and security interests in a way that respected international norms relating to the sovereignty and independence of its neighbors.

²¹ Ra'anan, "Imperial Elements in Russia's Doctrines and Operations," 22-25.

²² Dmitri Trenin, "Russia Redefines Itself and Its Relations with the West," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 96.

²³ Sergei Lavrov, "Containing Russia: Back to the Future?" *Russia in Global Affairs* 5, no. 4 (October-December 2007): 8.

While Russia's actions contain elements of post-imperialism, this model does not account completely for Russia's behavior. It is true that Russia's ultimate goal is to secure and safeguard the country's interests, and to ensure that economic and security concerns are met. However, the means Russia employs to achieve these goals are wholly neoimperialistic. Russia's actions cannot be seen as simply post-imperial, because Russia secures its interests in a way that impinges on the independence and sovereignty of neighboring states, particularly those that are vital for Russian interests. This is because national interests are viewed as a zero-sum game, and foreign policy aims are pursued in this way.

The operational framework for neoimperialism that will be employed in this paper is as such: *Neoimperialism encompasses the belief that Russia is, was and always will remain a Great Power. In order to secure this status at an international level, Russia seeks to establish an informal empire and dominate over countries that were once part of both Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, but are now deemed independent by the international community. Neoimperialism includes matters pertinent to both economic and security concerns, but zero-sum thinking is the dominant means to relate to world and regional powers in all respects: if it is good for someone else, it is bad for Russia. Russian neoimperialism has manifested in many ways, including control over peacekeeping mandates, which it refuses to internationalize. Also, the integration of Eurasia into the Euro-Atlantic community is unacceptable and Russia will ensure that this does not happen. Neoimperialism is a dangerous ideology that undermines stability in the region.*

Defining Resistance Identity

My discussion of resistance identity in Georgia is based around, and builds upon, a chapter by Jaba Devdariani, “Georgia and Russia: The Troubled Road to Accommodation,” in *Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution*. This is the only work I have seen that explicitly discusses the concept of resistance identity in Georgia. While other works discuss the desire of the Georgian government to be seen as a western democratic country, and to “join the west” through Euro-Atlantic integration, there is no name given to the framework.²⁴

Where my work differs from Devdariani’s is in the details and supporting theories. Devdariani does not discuss the importance of nation/nationalism. While the author mentions the importance of master myths, the role of ethnic myths in this formation is not touched upon. Finally, the history provided is very simple. While the chapter is well written, and provides an excellent basic understanding, the missing components take away from resistance identity as a process of formation, entrenched by certain key factors. While I will not touch upon these in the basic definition provided here, all of these factors and their role in the formation of Georgian resistance identity will be elaborated upon in Chapter One. For now, it will suffice to determine the key factors of resistance identity and what events triggered its formation.

²⁴ See, for instance: Ghia Nodia, “Georgia’s Identity Crisis,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995), 104-116; Kakha Jibladze, “Russia’s Opposition to Georgia’s Quest for NATO Membership,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (2007) 35-51; the following chapters in *Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, ed. Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2005): Ghia Nodia, “Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity,” 39-82; David Darchiashvili, “Georgian Defense Policy and Military Reform,” 117-151; Bruno Coppieters, “Location Georgian Security,” 359-387.

Building upon a large body of literature that posits identities are constructed,²⁵ Manuel Castells puts forward this hypothesis: the symbolic content of collective identity is largely determined by whom is in charge of this construction, and what the purpose of it is. Because identity construction is a social process, power relationships are an important factor. With that as a framework, resistance identity is formed when a more powerful group forces an alien discourse upon a different group, resulting in the group's loss of control over governing institutions and the public realm. The group, which is imposed upon, forms "trenches of identity and survival"²⁶ based on differentiating themselves from the dominant group. When resistance identity is formed, it generally occurs with the belief that the group's identity was already clearly defined by history, geography or biology, which helps to create boundaries of resistance.²⁷ It is a means to separate the oppressed from the oppressor.

Based on this theory, I posit that Georgia resistance identity was formed around several key events: Russian annexation of Georgia in 1801; the Soviet annexation of Georgia in 1921; and Russia's inappropriate conduct in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. During the Soviet period, this identity construct became deeply entrenched, only to explode in the 1980s with a burst of nationalism as the Soviet Union began to implode. It continued to gain salience in the 1990s and 2000s with Russia's policies towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and is very apparent in Saakashvili's regime. Resistance identity is both beneficial and detrimental to Georgia. Resistance identity has been an

²⁵ Perhaps one of the most famous constructivists is Alexander Wendt. See, "Anarchy is what states make of it," *International Organizations* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391-425. Another key figure in this movement is Benedict Anderson. His book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York, Verso: 1991) is a central work on the social construction of identity.

²⁶ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 8.

²⁷ Castells, *Power of Identity*, 8-9.

important factor in Georgia's democratic reforms, and has resulted in positive changes for the country, but it also clouds the judgment of Georgia's leaders. While Russia is a threat to Georgia, casting the blame for all internal problems onto Russia is dangerous because it limits the response of the Georgian government and important issues do not get resolved in a meaningful way.

Foreign Policy Constructs

Official Eurasianism

Russia's foreign policy behavior is best encapsulated by the concept Official Eurasianism. Graham Smith, Astrid Tuminez, Irina Isakova and James Richter all write of the importance of Eurasianist thinking in Russian foreign policy discourse. The arguments made by all of these authors cover five basic categories: (1) culture; (2) international status; (3) type of status; (4) method for maintaining internal stability; and (5) geopolitical borders.²⁸

Official Eurasianism encompasses key assumptions about Russia as a civilization unique from the West. With its unique position between Europe and Asia, Russia is a Eurasian power, whose role is to stabilize the heartland and act as a buffer between east and west. Because of this, Russia has different cultural values and geopolitical concerns. Russia believes that it is the rightful hegemon in its neighborhood, and pursues policies to this effect. The focus on Russia's great power status, which is intrinsically bound with

²⁸ These categories are taken from Tsygankov, "From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism."

restoring Russia's influence in its sphere of interest, namely, the Near Abroad points to Russia's neoimperial identity construct.

As such, the focus on CIS integration, and asserting military and economic power over the Near Abroad, is part of the larger framework for restoring Russia's great power status. This is also intrinsically linked with the belief that Russia must protect Russian speakers outside of the borders of the Russian Federation; Russia sees the CIS countries as privileged spheres of Russian interest. Furthermore, Russia's policy is to actively intervene in the problems of neighboring countries, particularly if these problems could potentially spill over into Russia, or damage Russian geopolitical interests. This behavior is further proof that Russia views the CIS countries as part of Russia's jurisdiction.²⁹

Join the West

Georgian foreign policy is guided by its desire to join the community of western nations, with Russia cast as the primary threat to Georgian security, as the resistance identity model shows. According to Ghia Nodia, Georgia's commitment to this democratic model is linked directly to the drive for independence; in that respect, democracy is an important rhetorical tool to state that Georgia had a place amongst the world's civilized states.³⁰ Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on democracy and liberty being traditional values in Georgia, and that Georgia is "an integral part of the

²⁹ See, Smith, "The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift and the New Eurasianism," 487-488; Tsygankov, "From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism," 254; Irina Isakova, *Russian Governance in the Twenty-First Century: Geo-strategy, geopolitics and governance*, (London: and New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 13, 15, 18; Tuminez, "Russian Nationalism," 50; Richter, "Russian Foreign Policy," 69-70, 81.

³⁰ Nodia, "Georgia's Identity Crisis," 106-107.

European political, economic and cultural area, whose fundamental national values are rooted in European values and traditions.”³¹ As such, the basic framework of this foreign policy paradigm, which I have based upon speeches and interviews given by Saakashvili and his government, is grouped around three major concepts: (1) independence; (2) ensuring territorial integrity; (3) Euro-Atlantic integration.

The 2003 Rose Revolution represented a final means to break with Georgia’s Russian and Soviet dominated past. The first Georgian reformers and nation builders, such as Ilia Chavchavadze, introduced European ideas to Georgia, and attacked the old archaic views and political passivity of the previous generations. The goal of the current Georgian leaders is very similar to the 19th century reformers: to build a prosperous, democratic Georgia that is a normalized, European nation state. “In that sense, they [the current leadership] are completing a Georgian nation-building project begun over 150 years ago by a radical group of intelligentsia activists seeking an end to the humiliation of colonial dependence.”³²

³¹ *National Security Concept of Georgia*.

³² Stephen F. Jones, “The Rose Revolution: A Revolution without Revolutionaries?” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19, no.1 (March 2006): 37.

Chapter 1

National Identity in Russia and Georgia: a Theoretical and Historical Overview

National identity is a potent force when assessing government behavior. In this chapter, I will discuss the forces at work in the construction of Russian and Georgian national identity. First, I will define nation and nationalism, to ground the discussion, and then explain the role of ethnic myths in the nationalist ethos. Most importantly, history is the key factor to understand these constructs, and I engage in an in depth discussion of Imperial and Soviet history and how it affected both countries. These factors are crucial, not only to assess national identity, but also to understand how it functions within foreign policy discourse. Nationalism is at the core of both Georgian and Russian national identities, which is then manifested in foreign policy. Historically, the key moment for crystallization of national identity for both countries occurred during the Romantic era, with nationalism playing a very important role in how Russia and Georgia interacted with each other.

I argue that the current construction of national identity in both Russia and Georgia is very much based on how each country interprets and understands its history. This greatly impacts how each country wishes to portray itself and, in turn, how it desires to be viewed by the international community. Russia's neoimperialism, its master myth and guiding principle, is based in Tsarist and Soviet policies and its understanding of their unique role in the region. Georgia's master myth, resistance identity, formed around the Russian annexation of Georgia in 1801, the Soviet occupation in 1921, and Russia's involvement in the Abkhaz and South Ossetian separatist conflicts of the 1990s.

These master myths are key to understanding the National Project, which defines the national interests of each country. In turn, this is then projected onto foreign policy.

Theoretical Constructs of Nation and Nationalism

Before discussing the ways in which these identity constructs manifest themselves in Georgian and Russian foreign policy behavior, it is necessary to discuss important theoretical concepts, which impact the salience of national identity. If we are to discuss the Georgian and Russian nations, it is important to define what a nation is, and who belongs to the nation. Conversely, how do these factors impact nationalism, a key driving force in the national identities of both countries, which then affects their foreign policy behavior? The discussion of nation and nationalism will be framed by the question of how it impacts national identity and foreign policy behavior. It is my contention that nationalism plays a key role in Georgian and Russian national identities, and is very much apparent in both foreign policy discourses.

The Nation

[A] nation... must possess a common history and culture...common myths of origin and descent, common memories and common symbols of culture. Otherwise we should be speaking only of territorial states. It is the conjunction, and interpretation, of these cultural or "ethnic" elements with the political, territorial, educational and economic ones, that we may term "civic," that produce a modern nation.³³

³³ Smith, "The Origins of Nations," 113.

According to Anthony D. Smith, these are the important components of a nation, which is formed by historical process and the construction of nationalist elites; nations are not constant and human will plays an important role in their formation. However, for any nationalist to be able to “create” the nation—through autonomy, unity and identity—there must be a foundation of association and culture to bind the people together.³⁴

Smith’s understanding of the nation shares elements with Stuart Kaufman’s definition of ethnic group, which is encompassed by five characteristics: group name, a shared belief in common descent, shared historical memories, shared cultural elements and association with a particular territory.³⁵ Smith writes that a nation is comprised of a named group that shares myths and memories, as well as an attachment to a territory or homeland. Furthermore, the group has common laws and customs and a distinct public culture.³⁶ The members of the nation are joined together by historical ethno-symbolism—that is, shared memories and collective cultural identities, which are intrinsically tied. In order for cultural identity to flourish, shared memories are essential, while shared memories are an integral part of cultural formation. Collective identity depends upon both.³⁷ It is Smith’s understanding of nation that will guide this research.

Nationalism

Having looked at nation and ethnicity, it is now appropriate to turn to nationalism and its definition. Stuart Kaufman defines nationalism as “the belief that one’s own

³⁴ Smith, “The Origins of Nations,” 107-109.

³⁵ Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 16.

³⁶ Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 245.

³⁷ Anthony D. Smith, “Ethnosymbolism and the Study of Nationalism,” in *Nations and Nationalism: a Reader*, eds. Phillip Spencer and Howard Wollman (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 23.

group should be politically autonomous...”³⁸ This is often based on ethnic myths, which sees the nation arising from intense struggle and defeating an adversary, who is the other against which ethnic identity is formed. Nationalists use the concept of the other, and important myths and symbols for two major ends: to justify an existing power structure, and to give people’s experiences a deeper meaning, as a way to motivate them to make personal sacrifices for the nation.³⁹ Building on Kaufman’s understanding, and providing a more robust explanation, Smith writes that nationalism is an ideological movement that seeks to achieve and preserve autonomy, unity and identity for a group that believes itself to be, or has the potential to be, a nation.⁴⁰

An excellent means to appeal to nationalist sentiment is through myths and symbols. Myths can be defined as a common belief amongst group members that provides meaning to events and actions, while symbols evoke the myth in a shorthand form. In a political context, choice is very much linked to emotional expressions, with politicians manipulating the group emotions associated with myths and symbols (symbolic politics). The most effective means to engage in symbolic politics is through ethnicity because of its emotive nature. Politicians appealing to shared history, memories, heroes, and symbols help evoke the myths that tie ethnic groups together. In the case of ethnic movements, and ethnic war, the appeal to ethnic symbols is a major impetus for group action, as myths, which blame other groups for current problems, make people feel aggressive and inspire action.⁴¹

³⁸ Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 16.

³⁹ Thomas Eriksen, “Ethnicity and Nationalism,” in *Nations and Nationalism: a Reader*, eds. Phillip Spencer and Howard Wollman (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 139.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 256; Smith, *Antiquity of Nations*, 245.

⁴¹ Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 27-30.

Ethnic and Master Myths

Ethnic myths are an important component of nationalist rhetoric. There are six categories of myths, according to Smith: myth of origin; myth of location; myth of ancestry; myth of heroic age (also known as the “golden age”); myth of decline; and myth of rebirth. This interpretation and understanding of history and myth gives a sense of legitimacy to nationalists and the nations, which they represent. These myths also represent the evolutionary view that the nationalists uphold. The first category of myth situates the people, allowing nationalist historians to date their origins in relation to other communities. It also allows for a generational understanding of the group, linking each member of the community within a linear succession that dates back to the group’s birth.

Myths of location give a territorial framework to the group, while myths of ancestry provide the group with a strong sense of kinship and community, since all members descend from the same ancestors. The fourth category of myth, that of the heroic age, is very important, as it provides nationalists with a prototype of virtue and heroism that they are currently striving to achieve in their cultural regeneration. Future goals of valor and greatness are forged from an understanding of the past heroic and golden age, and the heroes who lived during this time are meant to serve as role models for the current generation. Furthermore, the golden age symbolizes a time of liberation from foreign oppression, and because of this, the members of the group could focus their energies on great cultural achievements and political autonomy. The myth of decline explains how and why the group is in a state of decay. Typically, barbarian invasion plays a large role in this. Also, decadence, forgetting old values, and the destruction of

traditional hierarchies are involved in the group's decline. Lastly, the myth of regeneration is the core of nationalism, along with the concepts of authenticity and group autonomy, explaining how the group can and will restore its former glory.⁴²

The importance of useable history cannot be underscored in the nationalist process. Perhaps the key element of nationalism is the evocation of the group's golden age, which uses past glories to try and formulate a vision for the future. According to Smith, "People often remark on the Janus nature of the nation, at once visionary and nostalgic, backward-looking, yet oriented to the future. Some have seen this as they key to nationalisms' success."⁴³ The group's collective appropriation of antiquity is key for the nationalist project and the creation of the nation. Smith provides five ways in which history is used to help form the nation. First, selected history can be used by elites to influence and exploit mass sentiment. Second, the past can be used to legitimize social change, even if it is unpopular. Third, it can help to inspire public morality. Fourth, it provides the group with a title to territory, particularly if it is contested. Lastly, because history is malleable, it can be used by current generation to serve particular needs; events can be interpreted for what the current elites consider significant. In this understanding, the shared memory of the golden age is very important.⁴⁴

The quest for group authenticity is an important element of the golden age. The concept of the 'authentic self,' which is characterized by the myth of origin (who we are is determined from whence we came) and the other (the outsiders against whom the group defines its distinct character and individual nature), is very important to nationalist thinking. The golden age functions within this because it represents a time when heroes

⁴² Smith, *Myths and Memories of Nation*, 63-68.

⁴³ Smith, *Antiquity of Nations*, 211.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Antiquity of Nations*, 211-214.

and important values came into existence, which the group has great respect and reverence towards. It is also important to the concept of ‘authentic self’ because it is part of the larger evolutionary process inherent in nationalism, which posits that nations are born of small, original and pure beginnings, which then leads into a golden age, followed by a period of decline, until a second golden age or rebirth is experienced at the hands of the nationalists.⁴⁵

The return to this pristine epoch of history is also accompanied by a return to the importance of space, or homeland, which is the second function of the golden age. The idea of the homeland helps to establish the group within its own historic space, and establishes an important sense of continuity amongst generations. This reminder of past glories helps to point the group towards their destiny. How each generation interprets antiquity and the golden age is very important in shaping their future.⁴⁶ For the nationalists who are trying to create a new golden age, the myth of origin is of great importance. This outlined how the group came into existence and explained their roots. In this sense, nationalism became a resource to instigate rapid social change and mobilization. It also allowed nationalists—elites and intelligentsia—a narrative to claim their homelands.⁴⁷

On a larger scale, these concepts impact the creation of a master myth, which represents the “broadest part of the symbolic universe that a society uses to define threats to its existence and appropriate responses.”⁴⁸ How each group interacts with their history

⁴⁵ Smith, *Antiquity of Nations*, 221-223.

⁴⁶ Smith, *Antiquity of Nations*, 221-223.

⁴⁷ Smith, *Myths and Memories of Nation*, 60-62; 83-84.

⁴⁸ Jaba Devdariani, “Georgia and Russia: the Troubled Road to Accommodation,” in *Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, eds. Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold (Cambridge and London: the MIT Press, 2005), 155.

and their golden age affects the present and the future, because it is a means to situate their current situation, which includes threats and appropriate responses. The master myths of Georgia and Russia conceived during the Imperial period are still relevant today. The guiding principle in Russia was fused with the concept of empire because the constant drive to add new territories and peoples did not allow for a completion in defining and building the Russian state. Also, Russia's location at the cusp of Byzantine, Muslim and Western European civilization played an important role in determining Russia's attitude towards the world.⁴⁹ Despite the fact that the intelligentsia could not agree on what the essence of being Russian was, there was a very strong consensus among tsarist-era elites that Russia could not be reduced to its ethnic core and that it must have a messianic drive that transcends its borders.⁵⁰ The Georgian master myth was created in opposition to Russian imperialism, and was shaped around independence from Russia, as is still the case today. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the aristocracy championed the idea of the Russian betrayal of 1801 to stress the unacceptability of Georgian subservience to Russia.⁵¹

An important element in the creation of both Russian and Georgian master myths is the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century. Romanticism and nationalism are intrinsically tied phenomena, which is why I include Romanticism in my discussion. During the Romantic era, identity became about evoking a particular group voice and style, something unique, which was part of the wider search for authenticity within this period. Within the quest for authenticity—with national identity being part of this larger

⁴⁹ Alfred J. Rieber, "Persistent Factors in Russian Foreign Policy," in *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Hugh Ragsdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 344-345.

⁵⁰ Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 178.

⁵¹ Jaba Devdariani, "Georgia and Russia," 157.

mission—there are two important ideas for the purpose of this study: first, the quest for national identity assumed the existence of a true self that had to be unearthed; second, in order to find the authentic and true self, there must be a homeland. In this way, land and people became fused, with the rise of the ethnoscape, which also included the emotions that this attachment brought forth amongst the people.⁵²

The Interplay between Russia and Georgia: The Crystallization of National Identity

In this section, I will examine the interplay between Russian and Georgia based on the theoretical constructs discussed above, particularly how these ideas are evident in the formation of Russian and Georgian national identities. In order to explain the interplay between these countries during the Imperial period, I will employ the concepts of official and cultural nationalism, to show how and why Russia and Georgia were on opposite ends of the spectrum, with Russia dictating the situation, and Georgia responding against it. I will also engage with the Soviet period to show aspects of continuity between these time periods.

In 1510, a Russian monk from a monastery in Pskov announced the concept of Moscow as the third Rome. According to Irina Isakova, this Messianic vision became internalized in Russian identity and foreign policy behavior.⁵³ Shortly after this observation was made, Ivan the Terrible conquered Kazan and Astrakhan, two areas which were neither Slavic, nor Orthodox. This caused Russia to develop an imperial identity before it developed any conceptions of national identity. Ilya Prizel also notes

⁵² Smith, *Antiquity of Nations*, 244-247.

⁵³ Irina Isakova, *Russian Governance in the Twenty-First Century*, 11.

that Russian identity was ultimately entirely fused with imperial identity when Russia officially incorporated Ukraine as part of the Empire in 1654, and the entire legitimization of the Russian state depended upon possession of the western borderlands. As Russia expanded and colonized new lands, the line between Russia and the periphery became blurred.⁵⁴

For Russia, having a foothold in the Caucasus was particularly useful to mediate relations with the Persian Empire, as well as allowing them to pressure the eastern portions of the Ottoman Empire. Also, controlling the Transcaucasus was important for Russia to secure the southern portion of its border.⁵⁵ The situation in Georgia was favorable for Russian penetration into the region. During the eighteenth century, Georgia was fragmented into various principalities under the control of various empires, including Iran and the Ottoman Turks. Raiding tribes from the North Caucasus negatively impacted the economic conditions in Kartlo-Kakheti (eastern Georgia), because the merchants found it much easier to simply leave, along with their capital, than to face the constant threat of being robbed. Because of these conditions, eastern Georgia voluntarily went under Russian protection in 1783, with the Treaty of Georgievsk.⁵⁶

The Treaty of Georgievsk offered the Kingdom of Kartlo-Kakheti protection, in the form of Russian soldiers actively stationed in the country. Politically, the ruling Bagratid Dynasty would relinquish control over foreign policy decisions and conform to Russia's wishes. However, the ruling family was to remain on the throne, and in control

⁵⁴ Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 154, 165, 157.

⁵⁵ Muriel Atkin, "The Pragmatic Diplomacy of Paul I: Russia's Relations with Asia," *Slavic Review* 38, no. 1 (March 1979): 61-62; Susan Layton, *Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 4.

⁵⁶ David Marshall Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), 36.

over internal affairs.⁵⁷ Incidentally, Russia fell short when it actually came down to protecting Georgia, as the Russo-Turkish war of 1787, as well as other examples, demonstrate.⁵⁸

The accession of Alexander I changed the relationship between Russia and Georgia. Instead of being a protectorate of Russia, Georgia was officially annexed, with the ruling Bagratid family removed from the throne, thus proving Russia's imperial intentions towards Georgia. This unilateral action on the part of the new Tsar indicated that Georgia really had no say in any matters. Tsar Alexander cited "the defenseless state of Georgia, the menace of civil war, the unanimous appeals which had been received from the Christian population for protection against the Persians and Turks" for this action.⁵⁹ Over the course of the nineteenth century, the principalities of western Georgia were integrated into the Tsarist system and the entire territory of Georgia was once again united, which had not been the case since the Mongol invasions in the 13th century.

Official Nationalism

According to Benedict Anderson, official nationalism is "stretching the short, tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire."⁶⁰ Mechanisms of official nationalism include control over primary school education, propaganda, militarism and

⁵⁷ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 58.

⁵⁸ Catherine the Great removed the troops, which were stationed in the Caucasus, and left Georgia to fend for herself. Another example of Russia's abandonment of Georgia is in 1795, when the Shah of Iran attempted to re-conquer East Georgia, which had been a Persian province in the past. This resulted in the country being plundered, as well as many deaths. See Atkin, "The Pragmatic Diplomacy of Paul I," 61-62. Also see Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 37-38. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 59-60.

⁵⁹ Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 40.

⁶⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 86.

the rewriting of history by the state. All of this was done with the intent of enforcing the state-sponsored vision of state, nation and society onto the entire population in the empire.⁶¹ In the Russia of Nicholas I (1825-1855), this took the form of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality.' Orthodoxy and autocracy were clear enough, as there was a general understanding that Russia's fate was closely linked to a strong monarchy, and to the Orthodox Church, but there was a certain degree of ambiguity relating to what exactly nationality (*narodnost*) encompassed.

Two dominating ideas emerged to this effect: either *narodnost* was interpreted as encompassing all the national groups within the Russian Empire and trying to establish a more clear link between the monarch and all of his subjects; or it was explicitly referring to a Russian national consciousness as a means to facilitate Russian hegemony in the empire.⁶² Given the emphasis on Orthodoxy as a state-sponsored religion, I would argue that the second interpretation is more salient, because that component especially delineated who could identify as a member of the Russian nation. I argue, then, that within the Tsarist empire, the concept of *narodnost* was not designed to promote a multi-cultural empire, but rather an empire based on Russian ethno-cultural considerations.

This vision was very much the product of the Slavophile school of thought. Nikolai Danilevsky was a renowned Slavophile, whose book *Russia and Europe* was recommended by the Ministry of Education as a history textbook during the reign of Alexander III. The observations made by Danilevsky are excellent means to analyze the official formula of the Russian Empire (Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality), which began under Nicholas I. These observations are also relevant to understanding Russia's national

⁶¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 115.

⁶² Hubertus F. Jahn, "'Us': Russians on Russianness," *National Identity in Culture: An Introduction*, eds. Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 60-61.

identity and foreign policy discourse today, particularly the aspects related to autocracy and nationality. These manifestations will be discussed in section four of this chapter, in the introduction to Official Eurasianism, and then will be greatly expanded upon in Chapter Two. Table 1: Images of Russia and Russia's International Environment, which is in the second chapter, summarizes these key ideas.

First, Danilevsky notes the importance of Orthodox Christianity, as “[it] constituted the most essential element of ancient Russia life, and at the present time, the overwhelming spiritual interest of the ordinary Russian is also involved in it.”⁶³ Much like the 16th century monk who dubbed Moscow the Third Rome, Danilevsky pays homage to the idea that “the Russian and the majority of Slav peoples, became, with the Greeks, the chief guardians of living tradition of religious truth, Orthodoxy...they continued the high calling, which was the destiny of Israel and Byzantium: to be the chosen people.”⁶⁴

Danilevsky also writes that the Russian people never colonized like the ancient Greeks or the British Empire, nor do they possess colonial holdings, which has clear implications in terms of understanding *narodnost'* and who could identify with the Russian Empire. The official formula of nationality encompassed taking all the different ethnic and national groups within the Russian empire and forcing them to Russify and assimilate. This blurred any distinction between imperial identity and individual national identity, although the adherence to Orthodox Faith was a guiding principle and limit to this policy. As Danilevsky writes: “The Russian state from early Musovite times on has been Russia herself, gradually, irresistibly spreading out on all sides, settling neighboring

⁶³ Nikolai Danilevsky, “The Slav Role in World Civilization,” in *Readings in Russian Civilization*, ed. Thomas Riha, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 383.

⁶⁴ Danilevsky, “The Slav Role,” 384.

non-settled territories and assimilating into herself and into her national boundaries foreign populations.”⁶⁵ The idea of assimilating territories and populations into herself suggests Russifying policies as a means to do so.

Finally, in his defense of autocracy, Danilevsky writes that “there hardly ever has existed or exists a people so capable of enduring such a large amount of freedom as the Russians and so little inclined to abuse it, due to their ability to respect and trust in the authorities, their lack of love for power, and their loathing of interference in matters where they do not consider themselves competent.”⁶⁶ He attributes the cause of political strife to be love of power and the desire to humans to intervene in areas where they are not capable of doing so. He deems that the Russian people have a selfless attitude in their ability to trust the state’s use of power and to sacrifice their own personal interests in this regard. He also justifies autocracy by discussing the fact that because Russia was threatened by foreign enemies from both east and west, strong centralization was needed to keep these enemies at bay. If not for the strong government, the result would have been “the unequivocal loss of national independence.”⁶⁷

As this formula pertains to Russia and Georgia, there is a very particularly interesting element. Because Georgia was an Orthodox Christian country (long before Russia adopted the religion), Georgians could arguably identify with all the guiding principles of the Russian formula. However, this also raised some very interesting questions about Russia’s intentions and tactics. Because Georgia was a Christian country, Russia was theoretically not extending Christian civilization to the region, but rather could claim to be protecting Christianity from the Muslim tribes and empires that

⁶⁵ Danilevsky, “The Slav Role,” 385.

⁶⁶ Danilevsky, “The Slav Role,” 385.

⁶⁷ Danilevsky, “The Slav Role,” 387.

surrounded Georgia. However, Georgia and Georgians were always cast as the eastern “other,” as the primitive Asiatic, which needed the European civilizing mission that Russia was providing.⁶⁸

This largely manifested itself in Russian Romantic-era literature. The Romantic period was the first literary movement in which Georgia and Russia engaged together. As Ronald Grigor Suny writes: “A curious reciprocity cross-fertilized the works of Georgian poets, while the Caucasus and Georgia became a rich image of the exotic and romantic in Russian literature.”⁶⁹ The early nineteenth century was a time of intense and aggressive Tsarist penetration into the Caucasus, which coincided with the rise of Russian romanticism. A key feature of the Romantic period was characterized by Europe’s passion for the Orient and Far East. For Russia, the Caucasus represented this.⁷⁰

In Russian literature, Georgia was highly represented, and was used to advance Russian imperial interests. It also suggested the ambiguity of Russian national identity. An excellent example can be found in Pushkin’s travel accounts, where the Caucasus is explicitly seen as being a newly acquired part of Russia, thus highlighting the multiethnic nature of the Russian empire. At the same time, the Caucasus was also exotic, foreign and part of the Oriental.⁷¹ However, the key feature of Russian literature about Georgia

⁶⁸ Susan Layton, “Eros and Empire in Russian Literature about Georgia,” *Slavic Review* 51, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 196-199, 211-212. See also Peter Scotto, “Prisoners of the Caucasus: Ideologies of Imperialism in Lermontov’s “Bela,”” *PMLA* 107, no. 2 (March 1992): 246-260. Also, Ronald Grigor Suny, “The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, National Identity, and Theories of Empire,” in *A State of Nations: Empire Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 45-46.

⁶⁹ Ronald Grigor Suny, “The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia,” in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 121.

⁷⁰ Layton, *Literature and Empire*, 1.

⁷¹ Jahn, “‘Us’: Russian on Russianness,” 55.

was that Russian authors imagined and projected onto Georgia primitive, less civilized qualities than Russia, a European country. This took the form of the absence of Georgian heroes and the way in which Georgian men were portrayed in Russian literature: as feeble, spineless, impotent, and unintelligent. Insulting Georgian manhood was a means for Russian men to prop up their image of themselves, as a polar opposite: strong, brave, virile, and intelligent men, part of an imperial project and a European power destined to rule over a small territory in Asia.⁷²

Another important tactic used by Russian authors was to feminize Georgia; for instance, it was very common for Georgia to be portrayed “as a woman who must be protected *and* dominated by men stronger than those of her own country.”⁷³ Not only did Russia feminize the land, Georgia also had to be invented as a savage space, to justify Russian annexation of the region. Thus, Georgia was presented as weak and needed protection, but Georgia was also savage and needed civilization.⁷⁴ As such, for Russian authors, the Caucasus was a rich source of Romantic imagery, “with its noble savages, majestic mountains...exotic folk (the ethnic kaleidoscope of *gorsty*), things medieval (chain-mail, sword fights, ruins), Classical mythology...Biblical mythology...mysticism of various sorts, eroticism...the “Orient,” bandits, and a great procession of great military leaders.”⁷⁵

⁷² Layton, *Literature and Empire*, 192-193.

⁷³ Layton, “Eros and Empire,” 196.

⁷⁴ Layton, “Eros and Empire,” 211-212.

⁷⁵ Thomas M. Barrett, “The Remaking of the Lion of Dagestan: Shamil in Captivity,” *The Russian Review* 53 (July 1994): 358.

Cultural Nationalism

Cultural nationalism acted as an important force in nineteenth century Georgia. A key feature of cultural nationalism is the evocation of the golden age, as a means to critique the present situation, and as inspiration for the community to strive towards even higher stages of development. The movement was spearheaded by poets and historians, “moral innovators who establish[ed] ideological movements at times of social crisis in order to transform the existing belief systems from within and enable socio-political development on indigenous lines.”⁷⁶ To create the image of the ideal nation, cultural nationalists looked to myths and legends to instill a sense of ancient historic mission and a unique culture.⁷⁷

Cultural nationalism spread in Georgia as a direct response to Russian rule. As a start, the Russian military administration, which was in charge of Georgia was corrupt, dishonest and insensitive to local Georgian customs and traditions.⁷⁸ Coupled with access to new forms of education and European culture, this bred discontent among noble leaders in Georgia, who longed for independence from Russia. In 1832, a group of nationalist and monarchist Georgian nobles revolted against the Russians in an attempt to restore the fallen Bagratid Dynasty to the throne and remove Imperial Russia from their lands. The Georgian nobility was unsuccessful in this attempt, but it showed the high

⁷⁶ John Hutchison, “Moral Innovators and the Politics of Regeneration: the Distinctive Role of Cultural Nationalists in Nation Building,” in *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, ed. Anthony D. Smith (Leiden, New York and Koln: Brill, 1992), 101.

⁷⁷ Hutchison, “Moral Innovators,” 101-107.

⁷⁸ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 69.

levels of discontent among an important segment of the Georgian population.⁷⁹ As Lang notes:

The failure of the plot of 1830-1832 marks the end of an epoch in Georgian history. All hopes for a restoration of the Bagratid dynasty was now lost. The Georgian aristocracy came more and more to identify its own interests with those of the Russian autocratic regime.⁸⁰

The Romantic literary movement in Georgia saw the Georgian intelligentsia undertaking a search of their past, which was initiated by contact with Russia. Although these authors were unsure of Georgia's present or future, they viewed their heroic past with pride, and this was largely the focus of Georgian literature during the Romantic era. "The decline of old patriarchal and heroic patterns of life, the imposition of alien rule, and the growth of new economic order fostered the nostalgic, elegiac mood characteristic of several of the outstanding Georgian poets of the period."⁸¹ Nationalism and nationality were an important theme during this time period, and in Georgia, it was no different. The growth of Georgian national consciousness and the idea of the Georgian nation can be traced back to this time period as the impact of Russian imperialism provided the impetus for the intelligentsia to search their history.⁸²

[This] search...immediately raised doubts about Georgia's present and future while at the same time it created a congenial view of the past and a source of national pride. Thus, historians, like the poets, provided a small Georgian reading public with the images required to regard Georgia as a nation, just as the attention of both European and Russian intellectuals and politicians was focused on the question of nationality and nationalism.⁸³

⁷⁹ Lang, *Modern History of Georgia*, 69; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 72-73.

⁸⁰ Lang, *Modern History of Georgia*, 69.

⁸¹ Lang, *Modern History of Georgia*, 88.

⁸² Suny, "The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia," 121-122.

⁸³ Lang, *Modern History of Georgia*, 122.

A major preoccupation of the Georgian intelligentsia was the place of the Georgian language, as within the tsarist empire, knowledge of Russian was predominant and dictated social relations and political advancement. Language was a means to promote ethnic authenticity to somehow separate Georgia from the Russian regime.⁸⁴ For instance, Iakov Gogebashvili devoted his time to exposing pan-Slavic chauvinism, a movement, which had the potential to destroy the smaller nations that Russia had annexed. He stressed the importance of the Georgian language for Georgian self-respect. He believed that the cause of Georgian patriots “to restore Georgia’s right to self government, and their own civil rights, to preserve their national characteristics and culture, without which no people can exist as a society of human beings.”⁸⁵ His great work, *Deda Ena* (Mother Tongue) was designed to introduce Georgian children to their language. To this day, a modified version of this text serves as the basis for linguistic instruction to Georgian school children.⁸⁶

With the ascension of Tsar Alexander III to the throne, the era of Great Reforms in the Russian Empire came to an end, and the relationship between Russia and Georgia became increasingly strained. The Tsar’s particularly repressive policies were all designed to stifle independent thought, and the growing revolutionary movements.⁸⁷ The growth of Russian national chauvinism clashed with the emerging Georgian national sentiments. For one, the Tsar abolished the office of the viceroy and the Caucasian Committee in St. Petersburg, which reported directly to the Tsar and was independent of

⁸⁴ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 125.

⁸⁵ Lang, *Modern History of Georgia*, 111.

⁸⁶ Lang, *Modern History of Georgia*, 111.

⁸⁷ Lang, *Modern History of Georgia*, 112.

other ministries. Another important development stemmed from the active repression of Georgian nationalism.

...[The] governors of the Caucasus attempted to repress, or at least contain, expressions of nationalism while at the same time diverting Georgian hostilities away from the government and toward the Armenians. Nationality was made a consideration in recruitment of the state. Georgian language studies were further discouraged, even in the Tiflis seminary where a harsh Russianization regime was installed. The very word *Gruziia* ("Georgia" in Russian) was prohibited in print.⁸⁸

Tensions further mounted as the Russian counter-reforms greatly impinged upon the role the Georgians could play in the Tbilisi *duma*. Both raising the property qualifications for *duma* election and the elimination of dividing the electorate into ranks meant that the wealthiest men in the cities retained and strengthened their hold on local politics. In Georgia, this meant that the Armenians were in control of the *duma* as they made up the wealthy class. This played an important role in increasing Georgian resentment. Given the imperial nature of the regime, final authority was clearly given to the Russians.⁸⁹ However: "Both the socio-economic structure of [Tbilisi] and the partiality of tsarist legislation to the men of great property prevented Georgians from participating in the government of the city which had been their national capital since classical times."⁹⁰

These conditions, as well as the political and economic development, which caused a sharp increase in the numbers of the working class, allowed for Marxism to flourish. Marxism was a success because of its wide scale appeal to the growing working class, and its promise of uniting national and social struggles. Marxism provided the

⁸⁸ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 140.

⁸⁹ Suny, "The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia," 116, 139; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 141.

⁹⁰ Suny, "The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia," 139.

Georgians with a way to rebel against Imperial Russia, and to correct the ethnic class divisions, which characterized Georgia.⁹¹

When the Russian Revolution destroyed the existing order in the Russian Empire, Russia lost several of its imperial holdings, including Georgia, which was independent from 1918-1921. Throughout 1917, the Menshevik social democrats dominated the region politically, although independence was never a goal that they strived towards. Independence was a direct result of the civil war in Russia. Also, Georgia sought German protection to quell the Ottoman threat to the region, and when this protection was established, Georgia declared independence. The Mensheviks never sought a direct break with Russia, and although it was imposed, when it did occur, they decided to try and build a sovereign Georgia, which had a profound political and ideological affect on Georgians.⁹²

The Menshevik government took on nationalist causes to ensure independence and sovereignty, as all segments of Georgian society eventually came to favor independence. However, in order for Georgia to be successful, they needed the assistance of those western powers that emerged victorious from WWI. This support was never truly given, as “the Western powers had conceded the likelihood of a Soviet future for Georgia...”⁹³ Ultimately, it was the Russians who were prepared to fight for hegemony and control over the region, and in 1921, when they were in a position to do so, the Bolsheviks invaded Georgia.

⁹¹ Suny, “The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia,” 138-140; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 142-143.

⁹² Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 191-193.

⁹³ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 204.

Soviet Period

“The great paradox of Russia’s twentieth-century evolution was that a self-proclaimed empire fell in 1917 to be replaced by what became a neoimperial state that not only refused to see itself as an empire, not only considered itself to be the major anti-imperialist power on the globe, but became the unwitting incubator of new nations within it.”⁹⁴ Despite the aims of the revolution, the Soviet Union replicated many of the same strategies of its imperial predecessor. The Communist party in Russia blurred Russia’s imperial identity, while at the same time creating a farcical ethno-federal system. Part of the Bolshevik mission was to retake former Russian lands that gained independence in the collapse of the Tsarist Empire. In the process of doing so, a relationship of inequality was created between the centre and periphery that was reinforced by two factors: the Bolsheviks’ willingness to resort to violence and use of force, and Russia’s greater position of relative power.⁹⁵

When Georgia was invaded by the Soviet Union in 1921, after three years of independence, this was the situation and the policies being pursued by the centre. The sense of betrayal felt by Georgian nationalists by the end of the nineteenth century towards Russia, who brutally annexed Georgia and abolished their royal family, translated itself within the very short-lived Menshevik Democratic republic of Georgia (1918-1921). When the Soviet Union invaded in 1921, the level of distrust grew, and the notion that Russia was an unreliable and scheming partner, set on destroying Georgia

⁹⁴ Ronald Grigor Suny, “Living in the Hood: Russia, Empire, and Old and New Neighbors,” in *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century and the Shadow of the Past*, ed. Robert Legvold (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 48.

⁹⁵ Suny, “Living in the Hood,” 48.

sovereignty increased.⁹⁶ As during the Tsarist period, the Georgian experiences in the Soviet Union did not allow them agency to determine their own fate. The Soviet “modernizing” regime manipulated the population towards its particular aims.⁹⁷

For Stalin, “the USSR became a nationalizing empire intent on founding its identity and security on a new “imagined community”: the Soviet people...[which] was to be identified primarily with the practices and values stemming from the imperial Russian past.”⁹⁸ What is curious about this is that, while there was an attempt to create the “Soviet people,” there was little such attempt to build the “Soviet nation.” Citizens carried a passport, which declared their ethnic nationality (*nationalnost*). This was a legal category, which was transmitted by descent, and had nothing at all to do with place of residence.⁹⁹

The ethno-federal formation of the USSR, and the idea of “national self-determination” within a ‘socialist federation’ provided an ideological cover for something like the tsarist program of ‘official nationality.’”¹⁰⁰ Stalin’s policy was described as “ethnic in form, socialist in content”¹⁰¹ and was designed to modernize the society and usher in the communist era. Eventually, ethnic differences would disappear, and all groups would become Soviet. However, until that time in history, ethnic differences were real, and institutionalized. This was facilitated through a four-tiered system, with Union Republics bearing the name of a particular national group. Other national territories with differing degrees of autonomy and political, as well as administrative,

⁹⁶ Devdariani, “Georgia and Russia,” 157.

⁹⁷ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 290.

⁹⁸ Suny, “Living in the Hood,” 51.

⁹⁹ Rogers Brubaker, “Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account,” *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (February 1994): 54-57.

¹⁰⁰ Suny, “Living in the Hood,” 49.

¹⁰¹ Teodor Shanin, “Ethnicity in the Soviet Union: Analytical Perceptions and Political Strategies,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 3 (July 1989): 418.

institutions within each Union Republic, were also set up. The Union Republics were the highest form of autonomous, sovereign formation within the Soviet Union. The Soviet Constitution guaranteed each Union Republic the right to secede from the federation, to have foreign relations with other states, and to control and coordinate production within their given territory.¹⁰²

The reality was quite different than the rights they were guaranteed, as the Party effectively intervened in many facets of Republican jurisdiction. Despite the fact that the autonomous rights of the republic were on paper only, the institutional framework within each republic allowed for the creation of a national intelligentsia as well as for the protection of the national, titular language, although not at the expense of Russian. During the 1920s and 1930s, the *korenizatsiia* (nativization) policies legitimated the preferential treatment of the titular nationalities, for whom republics were named, in terms of access to employment and education.¹⁰³ In Georgia, this policy ensured that almost all the important positions within the republic-level government apparatus were held by Georgians, a drastic change from the Imperial period. This new policy was difficult for Armenians and Russians in Georgia, who traditionally held these important positions. *Korenizatsiia* also had a great impact on literacy in Georgia, and education initiatives were carried out to ensure instruction in the dominant languages of the republic: Georgian, Armenian, Azeri, Abkhaz, Osetin and Russian, although Georgian was the official language of the republic.¹⁰⁴

According to Suny, the purpose of *korenizatsiia* was twofold: it allowed for the development of “nations” within the USSR, and it was also an appropriate measure to

¹⁰² Brubaker, “Nationhood and the National Question,” 52.

¹⁰³ Brubaker, “Nationhood and the National Question,” 58.

¹⁰⁴ Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 233.

integrate hostile elites into the system. With the focus on the nationalities, the Russians were denied institutions, which were specifically Russian, as Russian nationalism was considered very dangerous to the Soviet revolution.¹⁰⁵ However, this protection of minority rights at the expense of Russian interests changed in the 1930s. Firstly, training and promoting local cadres, as well as the benefits associated with being part of a certain group, continued, but these policies were undertaken silently. Many of the national territories established in the 1920s were abolished, and the Soviet view of nationalities shifted to a more primordial view, which emphasized “the deep historic roots of all Soviet nations.”¹⁰⁶ Lastly, Russian became the dominant language of the bureaucracy, although national languages still were promoted in education and cultural matters. The reason for this policy shift is because of the resentment among Russian party members, and that high levels of national assertiveness were harming the idea of Soviet unity.¹⁰⁷

Because of this, Terry Martin dubbed the USSR as an affirmative action empire, which he likens this Miroslav Hroch’s three-phase model of national development.¹⁰⁸ In the Soviet case, however, instead of the three phases occurring separately, the Bolsheviks literally seized power over all three, and added what Martin dubs “Phase D.” This phase saw “the establishment of a new language of state and new governing elite...the Party became the vanguard of non-Russian nationalism.”¹⁰⁹ The Bolsheviks could thusly

¹⁰⁵ Suny, “Living in the Hood,” 50-51.

¹⁰⁶ Terry Martin, “An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism.” In *A State of Nations: Empire Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 81.

¹⁰⁷ Martin, “An Affirmative Action Empire,” 81-82.

¹⁰⁸ Phase A: non-political elite become interested in popular culture; Phase B: consolidation of national elite who desire the formation of a nation state; Phase C: emergence of a popularly supported nationalist movement

¹⁰⁹ Martin, “An Affirmative Action Empire,” 76.

manipulate nationalist development in order to guide it towards the Soviet goal of internationalism.

The Georgian experience within the Soviet Union during the Stalin period resulted in a sort of cultural revival, which was largely a continuation of the process that started in the late nineteenth century. The old intelligentsia that remained in Georgia after the 1921 invasion and the Soviet-educated intelligentsia complemented one another. Creative endeavors were expanded through state sanctioned arts and publishing which were strictly within the framework of Socialist aims. The process of integration into the Soviet system was occurring alongside re-nationalization, leading to confusion over the nature of Soviet policies. It was unclear whether “the goal of Soviet policy was to solidify the national or to assimilate the minorities.”¹¹⁰

However, the Stalin period, in particular, also thrust Georgia into the creation of a primarily urban and industrial society, transforming the peasant economy. Despite the fact that they lacked complete sovereignty over their territory, the Georgians, armed with their status as a titular republic, developed their own version of great power chauvinism vis-à-vis ethnic minorities, replicating the Russian great power chauvinism that was emanating from Moscow.¹¹¹ These tensions remained bubbling under the surface and when Georgia declared independence from the Soviet Union, Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared their independence from Georgia. This will be further discussed later in the chapter.

The decentralization and de-Stalinization of the Khrushchev era caused great confusion in Georgia, as de-Stalinization was viewed as being markedly anti-Georgian.

¹¹⁰ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 300.

¹¹¹ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 290-291.

In March 1956 an unofficial student rally took place at the statue of Stalin in Tbilisi to commemorate Stalin's great deeds, in conjunction with the third anniversary of his death. Although this anniversary was not celebrated officially in the USSR (due to the "thaw"), Georgian officials allowed the celebration to go forward. However, the students were attacked by police and the army. Many within Georgia blamed Khrushchev for this, and the violent response to this peaceful gathering only served to deepen anger and resentment towards the central government. For the youth, who was still unaware of the horrors that Stalin perpetrated during his reign, Stalin's achievements represented an important achievement for their nation, given Stalin's Georgian heritage. The Soviet government made concessions to Georgia as a result of this, in terms of loosening their control over Georgian culture. Decentralization also meant that local elites were able to solidify their power and gain a greater deal of control over Georgian autonomy.¹¹²

This riot was the first open act of Georgian nationalism in forty years, although that is not to say that national awareness simply did not exist in interim. Georgia's experiences with Stalinism altered the country in a very fundamental way. The traditional village society became largely urbanized and mechanized by force of "an alien political elite working through local national cadres."¹¹³ However, Georgian culture was also reaching new heights under Soviet policies, with more group cohesion, and more Georgians being educated in their history and learning the language. The protest in 1956 was a result of this growing national awareness, coupled with fears of losing their unique ethnicity because of the rapid modernization, both results of Stalin's rule. Together, both

¹¹² Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 302-303; Suny, "Living in the Hood," 53-54; Devdariani, "Georgia and Russia," 157-158;

¹¹³ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 303.

instilled in the young generation a strong sense of their ethnicity and a commitment towards it.

However, in direct opposition to this strong sense of Georgian identity, which continued to grow, was the designation of the Russians as the “older brother” to the other Soviet nationalities and the intense Russification policies that occurred after Khrushchev was removed from power. During the Brezhnev years, for example, Russian nationalism was tolerated, particularly in relation to Russian anti-Semitism and xenophobia. As Prizel notes, regarding the link between Russian and Soviet identity, “communist historiography reinforced the psychological link between the Russian identity and the empire, and the notion of Great Russia (*velikaia Rus'*) enshrined the endemic sense of messianism in the Russian national mythos.”¹¹⁴

This Russification policy and the increasing attempts to link Russian and Soviet identity clashed with the nationalism that growing in Georgia. During the 1970s, extreme nationalism emerged, concentrated within a small number of professionals and students, amongst them, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who would become independent Georgia’s first elected President. Within the intelligentsia, nationalist trends included a religious revival, the desire for free speech, and a marked distrust for Russians because of the extreme Russification policies that were occurring. The most extreme of these policies occurred in 1978, when the government tried to remove Georgian as the sole official state language, trying to elevate Russian and other regional languages to this official status. This resulted in a protest of 5,000 people, mostly students. The end result was that the change did not take place, a most unusual concession to a clear opposition towards state

¹¹⁴ Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 201.

policy; this highlighted the trepidation of the central government towards this emerging nationalism.¹¹⁵

With the loosening of central control during the Gorbachev years, “[reform] ultimately led to revolution; renewal and restructuring, to collapse and disintegration.”¹¹⁶ *Perestroika* and *glasnost* indicated a fundamental shift in the identity of the Soviet Union, in an attempt to show that the USSR was a partner, and not a foe, in the new world order. The ultimate collapse of the USSR shows the triumph of nationalism over empire, as greater freedoms of expression ultimately led to an upsurge in nationalist sentiments.¹¹⁷

The Soviet collapse was very difficult for Russia. During the Soviet period, the country was considered one of two of the world’s super powers. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia had an imperial, and Cold War superpower narrative to fall back on, in terms of collective identity.¹¹⁸ As Boris Dubin writes, from the 1930s on, three key factors became motivating forces for Soviet identity: mission, *derzhava*, and border. The mission of the USSR was to counter the capitalist west. The idea of *derzhava* referred to Russia’s great power status. Finally, the concept of border denoted the physical separation between the Soviet Union and everyone else.¹¹⁹ When the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia used its imperial past and Soviet experiences as the basis for Russian statehood. A key example of this is evident in the way Russia was involved in aiding Abkhaz separatists, and acting as peacekeepers in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The

¹¹⁵ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 309.

¹¹⁶ Suny, “Living in the Hood,” 54.

¹¹⁷ Suny, “Living in the Hood,” 58-59; Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 213.

¹¹⁸ Devdariani, “Georgia and Russia,” 158.

¹¹⁹ Борис Дубин, “Противовес:” Символика Запада в России последних лет,” *Pro et Contra* 8, no.3 (2004): 24.

way in which Russia undermines Georgian sovereignty to ensure its needs are met are clear indications of neoimperialism.

In Georgia, a drive for independence and nationalism took hold, although no single or unified nationalism emerged, highlighting the deep ethnic divisions within Georgian society. With these ethnic divisions and strife at the fore, the ethnic Georgian nationalists made decisions that only made these cleavages much worse. As it became apparent the Soviet Union would collapse, tensions began emerging in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, two autonomous formations within Georgia. Abkhazia was an Autonomous Republic within Georgia, although it was initially its own Union Republic, and tension with Georgia always existed to some extent. South Ossetia's status was that of Autonomous Region, and during Soviet times, there was little tension between Ossetians and Georgians. During *perestroika* and *glasnost*, when it became acceptable and safe to voice dissent, nationalist groups began forming in Georgia. Their alarming nationalist rhetoric was the catalyst for the Abkhaz and South Ossetian mobilization. With the ethnic minorities concentrated in their autonomous formations, and with institutions in place that could support their independence, South Ossetia and Abkhazia began asserting their desire for independence, alongside Georgia, which was demanding independence from the USSR.¹²⁰

Although the Georgian people did not question the rights of minorities to live within Georgia, there was an inherent belief that ethnic minorities should show loyalty to the national project, which was achieving independence from the Soviet Union. Any acts contrary to this were deemed to be disloyal, and were considered by government officials as necessary impetus for reprisals. This was especially evident under Zviad

¹²⁰ Nodia, "Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity," 40-44, 49.

Gamsakhurdia, Georgia's first freely elected president, who actually referred to Georgia's ethnic minorities as "guests."¹²¹ It has been difficult for Georgians to grasp the concept of minority rights and protection, but this is in large part due to the fact that they view secession as a huge threat to the integrity of their country.¹²² For them, Abkhazia and South Ossetia are important parts of the Georgian homeland.

This ultimately resulted in three civil wars, being fought almost all at the same time: between Georgia and South Ossetia; Georgia and Abkhazia; and between Gamsakhurdia supporters and the new government led by Eduard Shevardnadze. Given the circumstances, Georgia was forced to appeal to Russia for help, and in return, had to join the CIS. Also, Russia directly aided the Abkhaz in terms of supplying munitions, intelligence and direct military support. Although they had been aiding the Abkhaz, the Russians still interceded as peacekeepers. Russian officials argued that their peacekeeping role was important in the region because they were ensuring stability in regions of the former USSR that were torn apart by ethnic strife, using relationships that were built up during the Soviet period. Russia was also involved in a peacekeeping mandate in South Ossetia. Russia's role in both conflicts is an important indicator of neoimperialism.

¹²¹Nodia, "Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity," 46.

¹²² Johanna Popjanevski, "Minorities and the State in the South Caucasus: Assessing the Protection of National Minorities in Georgia and Azerbaijan," *Central Asian-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program* (September 2006): 16.

The National Project

Both Russia and Georgia faced difficult transition periods from the Soviet Union towards independence, and as a result clear “national projects” were not formed until fairly recently. The concept of national project is important when assessing national identity and foreign policy, as it is determined by national issues, and is often formed by the influence of role models, as well as elites within the state. Role models are especially important to late developing countries, as they tend to imitate the successful qualities of more developed countries, while trying to “find a niche that represents their own political personality.”¹²³ I argue that under President Putin Russia developed a clear national project that can be described as Official Eurasianism, which encompasses neoimperialism. Georgia’s national project became very clearly articulated with the 2003 Rose Revolution, which showed a clear desire to break with the past and join the community of western nations.

Official Eurasianism encompasses key assumptions about Russia as a civilization unique from the West. With its unique position between Europe and Asia, Russia is a Eurasian power, whose role is to stabilize the heartland and act as a buffer between east and west. Because of this, Russia has different cultural values and geopolitical concerns.¹²⁴ Russia’s assertive stance in the CIS countries and the near abroad can be explained by these geopolitical calculations. It also explains how Russia views its place and role in the international community.

¹²³ Nodia, “Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity,” 42.

¹²⁴ See Smith, “The Makers of Proteus,” 487-488; Tsygankov, “From International Institutionalism,” 254; Isakova, *Russian Governance in the Twenty-First Century*, 13, 15, 18; Tuminez, “Russian Nationalism,” 50; Richter, “Russian Foreign Policy,” 69-70, 81.

The Near Abroad¹²⁵ is important to Russia because “[this] space is bound up with Russia’s past greatness, its geopolitical security, its economic interest and the well-being of its diaspora.”¹²⁶ Russia gained its influence in these areas over centuries and complete withdrawal is unacceptable to those in power in Russia. This mentality began under Yeltsin, became more pronounced during Putin and is continuing to be an important factor of Medvedev’s presidency. Furthermore, Russia’s involvement in the Near Abroad is pursued by the government due to its unique mission as a Eurasian superpower. These areas not only influence internal stability, but also are important for national interests, especially in the economic arena.¹²⁷

The concept of *derzhava*, or great power status is also an important element of Official Eurasianism. Russian conceptions of great power status are not a new phenomenon. In 1922, *Izvestia* wrote: “As a result of imperialist and civil wars, Russia temporarily disappeared from the horizon as a Great Power. Russia is coming back to the international stage. Let us hope that the day is at hand when her reappearance will be felt so strongly, that no one will dare to contradict her voice.”¹²⁸ A similar feeling of Russia’s triumphant return to the international stage, and the importance of Russia’s role in the international community characterizes Official Eurasianism and the current time period. As such Russia does not look kindly on other countries meddling in its sphere of

¹²⁵ The republics of the Near Abroad encompasses the entire territory of the former Soviet Union. During Yeltsin’s presidency, policies for reintegration with these territories began. This project was enhanced during Putin’s time as President, as it was during his reign that Russia developed very clear and more decisive policies toward the region. Please see: Michael Rywkin, “Russia and the Near Abroad under Putin,” *American Foreign Policy Interests* 25, no. 1 (2003): 3-12; *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. Celeste A. Wallander (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996).

¹²⁶ Smith, “The Masks of Proteus,” 488.

¹²⁷ Tsygankov, “From International Institutionalism,” 255; Isakova, *Russian Governance in the Twenty-First Century*, 31-31; Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 269; Tuminez, “Russian Nationalism,” 59; Richter “Russian Foreign Policy,” 80-81.

¹²⁸ *Izvestia*, 7 December 1922, found in Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 239.

influence, that is, the Near Abroad, as the idea of *derzhava* is explicitly linked to that territorial space.¹²⁹

Intervention in the Near Abroad to ensure that conflicts do not spill over into Russia's borders encompasses another important element of Official Eurasianism. Peacekeeping troops are a particularly important tool used by the Russian Federation in neighboring countries that have active conflicts. The peacekeeping mandate also ensures that Russia is able to strategically promote its own interests and meddle in the affairs of sovereign states.¹³⁰ Russian forces, under the guide of CIS peacekeeping troops, have effectively used the Georgian conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia as political bargaining chips in the region. When CIS peacekeepers were introduced the region, the UN determined several key conditions: first, any peacekeeping mandate must have the permission of the country peacekeepers were entering; and second, the peacekeepers needed to be impartial and undertake measures to ensure the territorial integrity of the country they were stationed in. Also included in this list was the fact that Russian troops could not account for more than 30% of the CIS peacekeeping group on a given territory.¹³¹ In Georgia, not a single one of these conditions was met, as will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

Common economic space is also an important consideration, and it largely explains why Russia views the CIS as so important. For Russia, the CIS was not only a way to foster closer political and economic ties with the former Soviet republics, but also

¹²⁹ Smith, "The Masks of Proteus," 288; Tsygankov, "From International Institutionalism," 261-262; Isakova, *Russian Governance in the Twenty-First Century*, 14; Tuminez, "Nationalism," 50; Richter, "Russian Foreign Policy," 80.

¹³⁰ Harry H. Almond, Jr., "Peacekeeping: Russia's Emerging Practice," in *Russia: a Return to Imperialism?* eds. Uri Ra'anan and Kate Martin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 33-65; Smith, "The Masks of Proteus," 489.

¹³¹ Ra'anan, "Imperial Elements," 24-25.

to elevate Russia's status within global economic affairs.¹³² Another key idea of Official Eurasianism is the Russian diaspora. When the Soviet Union collapsed, many Russians found themselves outside the border of the Russian federation. These Russians have become a major concern for the government. However, it is not just about protection of ethnic Russians, but also Russian speakers in the former Soviet space. Russia, therefore, champions the rights of both ethnic Russians and Russian speakers of the Near Abroad. Issuing citizenship is an important example of this cause.¹³³

In the case of Georgia, European nation states serve as the role model, and their national project is to "join the west," that is, to be a western style liberal democratic state. Furthermore, the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are seen as important mechanisms to safeguard the Georgian state and identity, and by virtue of this, the national project.¹³⁴ The 2003 Rose Revolution represented a means to finally break with Georgia's Russian and Soviet dominated past, as well as the traumatic experiences of the 1990s. The first Georgian reformers and nation builders, such as Ilia Chavchavadze, introduced European ideas to Georgia, and attacked the old archaic views and political passivity of the previous generations. This discourse was evident in the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921), and has been reinforced since the 2003 Rose Revolution. The goal of the current Georgian leaders is very similar to the nineteenth century reformers: to build a prosperous, democratic Georgia that is a normalized, European nation state. "In that sense, they [the current leadership] are completing a Georgian nation-building project begun over 150 years ago by a radical

¹³² Ariel Cohen, "Revisiting Russia's Turbulent Rim: Caucasus, Central Asia, and Moldova," in *Russia: a Return to Imperialism?* eds. Uri Ra'an and Kate Martin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 90-92; Smith, "The Masks of Proteus," 489-490.

¹³³ Smith, "The Masks of Proteus," 489-490; Tuminez, "Nationalism," 50.

¹³⁴ Nodia, "Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity," 78.

group of intelligentsia activists seeking an end to the humiliation of colonial dependence.”¹³⁵

Saakashvili's inauguration in 2004 raised important symbolic messages for Georgia's European aspirations and the goal to make Georgia a strong state. The fact that he was inaugurated and took the Holy Oath at the Gelati Cathedral is indicative of two important things. First, Saakashvili received the blessing of the Church, which is possibly the most powerful symbol of Georgian identity. Secondly, the greatest king of the eleventh century, David the Builder, is buried at that cathedral. By harkening to a period when Georgia was a strong state, Saakashvili was sending a message about the kind of state he wanted contemporary Georgia to be. Another allusion to the illustrious golden age in the eleventh and twelfth centuries made by the Saakashvili government came in the form of introducing a new Georgian flag, which is actually the same flag that was used during that time period. Again, this is symbolic of a strong Georgian state. The eleventh and twelfth centuries also represented a time when Georgia actively cooperated with Europe, by way of the Crusades, highlighting a very rare moment when Georgia can legitimately claim affiliation with the west. By referencing this time period, Saakashvili is showcasing not only a time when Georgia was a strong state, but also a time when it was able to contribute and participate in European projects. His allusions to Georgia's golden age highlight not only past glories, but indicate the factors needed to create the necessary conditions for a new period of great achievements. As such, at Saakashvili's inauguration following the Rose Revolution, two flags were flown—the new Georgian

¹³⁵ Jones, “The Rose Revolution,” 37.

flag dating back to the eleventh century and the European flag used by the EU and the Council of Europe, suggesting both ancient and modern affiliations with Europe.¹³⁶

This chapter has sought to explain national identity in both Russia and Georgia through a theoretical and historical discussion. In the next chapter, I will explore the foreign policy implications of this. By explaining the identity constructs and national projects of both countries, it is my intention to show the incompatibility between them. Foreign policy and actions undertaken by each government towards the other will build upon this idea. To show the practical implications of this, I will examine the interplay between the two countries with NATO enlargement as an explanatory tool.

¹³⁶ Nodia, "Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity," 78-81.

Chapter 2

Foreign Policy Discourse in Russia and Georgia and the NATO Quagmire

This chapter will explore relationship between national identity and foreign policy. Using the identity constructs established in Chapter One, I will examine how neoimperialism and resistance identity manifest themselves in both Russian and Georgian foreign policy behavior. Since foreign policy depends upon a shared sense of national identity, which is impacted by group myths and understandings of history, identity is an intermediary filter between reality and state behavior. This is the central tenant of critical geopolitics, a guiding theory for this chapter. The concept of “power projector” is also a crucial element of this theory, and is very useful for explaining Russian behavior. Power projecting actors act outside of their legal borders, with clear goals of affecting world order, and their actions are ideologically driven.¹³⁷

The National Identity Dynamic is also an important theoretical construct for explaining the role of national identity within a foreign policy framework. Identity is a function of three factors: the mass national public, government foreign policy, and how the nation understands its relationship with the international community. Mass sentiments can be both manipulated and appropriated by the government; likewise, the mass national public can affect the government and its policies.¹³⁸ Because of the relationship between these factors and national identity, I will use speeches given by Russian and Georgian leadership as a key element of my analysis of Russian and Georgian foreign policy behavior. Foreign policy documents will also be used.

¹³⁷ Houweling and Amineh, “Introduction,” 9-11, 16.

¹³⁸ Bloom, *Personal Identity*, 79-80.

Russian foreign policy is best explained through Official Eurasianisms, which makes critical assumptions about Russia's role, both regionally and internationally, that are apparent in Russian foreign policy discourse. To explore this issue, first, I will look at speeches given by the President to the Federal Assembly from 2000-2008, as well as Putin's speech at the 43rd Annual Munich Conference on International Security. These speeches are an important means to gauge how the Russian government assesses its successes and failures for a given year, and they clearly articulate major foreign policy goals in both the short and long term.

Georgian foreign policy is characterized by Georgia's desire to join the west. As it pertains to Georgia and the manifestation of resistance identity in foreign policy, I will examine speeches given by President Saakashvili to the Georgian parliament, and also to international audiences, such as at various Munich Conferences and the UN General Assembly. Also, I will explore the *National Security Concept of Georgia* and the *Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009*. The analysis revolves around three issues that are continuously stressed by the President and within the documents: independence, ensuring territorial integrity and democracy/Euro-Atlantic integration.

What I seek to establish in this chapter is that because Russia and Georgia's national identities are in opposition with each another, key foreign policy aims also clash. The implications of their divergent goals are examined in the final section of this paper, which is a case study regarding NATO enlargement. In this section, I analyze why Georgia is seeking NATO membership, why Russia is opposed to this endeavor, and how this disagreement between the two countries has manifested itself in their relationship and the actions that both undertake.

National Identity as a Factor of Foreign Policy

As Christopher Hill and William Wallace write:

Effective foreign policy rests upon a shared sense of national identity, of a nation state's 'place in the world,' its friends and enemies, its interests and aspirations. These underlying assumptions are embedded in national history and myth, changing slowly over time as political leaders reinterpret them and external and internal developments reshape them. Debates of foreign policy take place within the constraints this conventional wisdom about national interests set upon acceptable choices.¹³⁹

In order for foreign policy to have a general sense of legitimacy policy makers must interact with the politics of identity; that is, a particular set of ideas relating to political community, and which creates a sense of cohesion and solidarity among the population. Lisbeth Aggestam further writes that as the politics of identity become internalized, it can become an important prism through which foreign policy makers understand political reality.¹⁴⁰

Critical Geopolitics

This idea is very important in the theory of Critical Geopolitics as proposed by Henk Houweling and Mehdi Parvizi Amineh. They write that identity constructs act as intermediary variables between the realities on the ground and how actors behave, and that "the impact of political and economic factors on actor behavior works out partially through their effect on ethnic consciousness, which itself is an effect of political and

¹³⁹ Hill and Wallace, "Introduction," 8.

¹⁴⁰ Lisbeth Aggestam, "Role Conceptions and the Politics of Identity in Foreign Policy," *ARENA Working Paper* 15, no. 2 (1999), 3. http://www.arena.uio.no/publications/wp99_8.htm

economic causes of behavior.”¹⁴¹ Political and economic factors play a role in the expression of group identity, while group identity and awareness help to explain the ways in which actors are behaving politically and economically. Because self-constructed identity is also an intervening variable between social reality and actor behavior, it is dependent upon political and economic causes, but also affects perceptions of reality.¹⁴²

Another important component of critical geopolitics is that actors, who act outside of their legal borders, are called power projectors. Their actions and the interests they pursue carry certain ideological assumptions, which affect the behavior of the actor. In the Russian-Georgian relationship, Russia is the power projector. Power projecting activities affect the world order and act as policy inputs, which originate at the domestic level of the state. These actors have particular ideas about what is needed from outside actors to maintain domestic order. As the world order changes, it affects the ways in which foreign policy is created and implemented, as power projectors are rewarded or punished for their actions.¹⁴³ Power projection is a central element of Official Eurasianism and is a useful tool to explain Russia’s role in the Near Abroad, and particularly in Georgia. The peacekeeping mandate is key example of Russia’s power projecting behavior.

Further elucidating the relationship between national identity and foreign policy, William Bloom argues that it is possible to delineate a triangular relationship between three factors, which Bloom calls the National Identity Dynamic. This “describes the social-psychological dynamic by which a mass national public may be mobilized in

¹⁴¹ Houweling and Amineh, “Introduction,” 9.

¹⁴² Houweling and Amineh, “Introduction,” 9-11.

¹⁴³ Houweling and Amineh, “Introduction,” 16.

relation to its international environment.”¹⁴⁴ According to Bloom’s national identity dynamic, a threat to national identity or an opportunity to enhance it, are key mobilizing factors for the mass national public.

The National Identity Dynamic

Figure 2: The National Identity Dynamic¹⁴⁵

As the above figure illustrates, mass sentiment can be manipulated or triggered and appropriated by the government in its decisions, but the government can also be manipulated by the national identity dynamic. Furthermore, mass sentiment can also be affected by outside actors. As such, Bloom concludes: “The mass national public will always react against policies that can be perceived to be a threat to national identity. The mass national public will always react favorably to policies which protect or enhance national identity.”¹⁴⁶ National identity is an important filter through which to understand political realities and formulate foreign policy.

¹⁴⁴ Bloom, *Personal Identity*, 79.

¹⁴⁵ Based on information from: Bloom, *Personal Identity*, 80.

¹⁴⁶ Bloom, *Personal Identity*, 80.

The National Identity Dynamic is a useful tool to explain foreign policy discourse because of the factors national identity is a function of. By taking into account the citizens of the country, the government and its foreign policy decisions, as well as the international environment in relation to the country, I can provide a fuller and richer analysis of the situation in Russia and Georgia. For instance, Russia, as a power projecting country, is seeking to change the dynamics of the international environment, because the government views the current situation as detrimental to Russian interests. These interests are dictated by ideological concerns, namely Russia's ability to retain its great power status and to be a key player internationally. In order to do so, Russia must be in a position of power, vis-à-vis the CIS countries. Recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, clearly driven by internal Russian ideology was a means to change the international environment, and send a clear message to Georgia and the rest of the world about Russia's dominant position in the region.

In Georgia, the factors of the National Identity Dynamic are also very important for understanding foreign policy. The symbolism of the Rose Revolution, and Saakashvili's appeals to Georgia's European aspirations affect and are affected by the international community. Georgia desires the recognition of the international community, most notably the Euro-Atlantic community, that it is a normalized, European nation-state, and no longer viewed as an appendage to Russia. This greatly affects the Georgian people, who strongly support NATO membership. In a referendum held in

January 2008, more than 76% voted in favor of joining NATO.¹⁴⁷ This is a clear example of the national identity dynamic at play.

Foreign Policy Discourse

Russian Foreign Policy

Russian foreign policy is best explained by Official Eurasianism, which I briefly discussed in Chapter One, and will now expand upon. Russia's neoimperial identity construct is apparent within Official Eurasianism. An important element of Official Eurasianism is geopolitics; therefore, I will discuss those elements of geopolitics that are necessary to understand within the framework of Russian foreign policy. Central tenants of Official Eurasianism will be summarized in Table 1: Images of Russia and the International Environment, which will then be expanded upon. This will situate the way Russia views itself, and in turn, how it influences Russian foreign policy behavior. To prove this, I will analyze Putin's speeches to the Federal Assembly from 2000-2007, as well as his speech at the 43rd Annual Munich Conference on Security; because I believe that Medvedev is following similar policies to Putin, I will also look at Medvedev's 2008 Speech to the Federal Assembly, which shares key ideas with the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, approved on July 12, 2008 by President Medvedev.

¹⁴⁷Michael Haltzel, *Hearing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe: "NATO enlargement and the Bucharest Summit,"* March 4, 2008 http://transatlantic.sais-jhu.edu/CTR_in_the_News/Haltzel_3.4.08_NATOenlargementtestimony.pdf

Table 1: Images of Russia and Russia's International Environment¹⁴⁸

Image	School of Thought		
	International Institutionalism	Realism (Official Eurasianism)	Revolutionary Expansionism
Culture	Russia is a western country	Bridge country between Europe and Asia; mixture of East and West; Slav-Turk community	Eurasian, anti-American country
International status	One of many normal great powers	Great power; multipolarity with Russia as a major pole	Superpower, 1 of 2
Type of state	Confederation of nation-states	Neoimperial State	Empire, seeking constant expansion
Method of maintaining internal stability	International cooperation on economic and security issues; democracy; market economy	High degree of centralization; economic and military modernization; prudent leadership; Leadership role in integrating/organizing CIS	Continuing to expand outside its geopolitical borders
Geopolitical borders	National borders—Russian federation; confederation with former USSR (except Baltic states)	Borders of Russia extend to Near Abroad countries	Far beyond the former Soviet Union
Degree and source of hostility in the international environment	Mostly friendly	Hostile; conflicts on Russian periphery are threat to vital Russian interests	Hostile; US led geopolitical plot against Russia
Attitude towards former Soviet republics	Non-threatening	Some are threatening because of internal military and ethnic conflicts; also threatening because some are under Western influence.	Until they are reintegrated into Russian empire, they are a threat
Attitude toward the West	Friendly, wants cooperation with West	Implicitly hostile, but can possibly cooperate on some issues	Not openly hostile towards Europe, but openly hostile towards US

¹⁴⁸ Based on charts from Tsygankov, "From International Institutionalism," 254, 257; also, please see Sergunin, "Discussions of international relations," 19-35; Shakleyina and Bogaturov, "The Russian realist school," 37-51 and Solovyev, "Geopolitics in Russia," 85-96.

Another excellent tool to help assess what Russia deems important in foreign policy is an article found in *RIA Novosti*, written towards the end of Putin's presidency, listing what the Putin government did well, and what areas need improvement. Particularly telling is the list of what Putin did well: the restoration of Russia's status as a leading world power; the restoration of Russian self-respect; repelling the "Colored Revolutions" along Russia's borders; and the preservation of old integration mechanisms (CIS, CSTO) and the creation of a new one (SCO).¹⁴⁹ This list greatly complements my analysis of Official Eurasianism in Russian Foreign Policy. The predominant theme of this list is Russia's great power status and ability to temper outside influences in its sphere of interest.

Based on Table 1, it is apparent that from the three images provided, Russia is best described as pursuing a realist foreign policy, but within this, geopolitics plays a very important role; thus, realism is encapsulated within the umbrella of Official Eurasianism, which is very much driven by geopolitics. Geopolitics is an important dimension in Russian foreign policy and particularly tied to realism, as the ultimate goal of geopolitics is to study the rise and fall of states within the sphere of international relations.¹⁵⁰ According to E.G. Solovyev, geopolitics has captured the imaginations of large segments of Russian society, as well as the government. He elaborates that the very notion of Eurasianism is geopolitical at its core, particularly in its delineation of how Russia is neither Europe nor Asia, and what this means for Russian culture and its political mission. Because geopolitics is the study of how politics is impacted by

¹⁴⁹ Дмитрий Косырев, "Внешняя политика России за последние восемь лет." *RIA Novosti*, February 28, 2008, <http://www.rian.ru/review/20080228/100230020.html>.

¹⁵⁰ See *Global Geostrategy: Mackinder and the Defense of the West*, ed. Brian W. Blouet (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2005).

geographic space, in Official Eurasianism there is a clear preoccupation with Russia's borders, and sphere of influence. These issues are at the core of Russian foreign policy.¹⁵¹ For instance, the first speech to the Federal Assembly given by Dmitri Medvedev in 2008 is heavy with rhetoric expounding Russia's morals and ideals. First and foremost, he alludes to Russia as a great civilizing power, which helped to create a unique culture for a great people. "Our people gave a rich spiritual and moral heritage...and there are things that we will never give up, regardless of the circumstances,"¹⁵² he says.

Richard Sakwa notes that the realism in Russia's foreign policy contains elements of idealism, in so far as he believes that Russia is inherently European, and should be accepted in the international community on its own terms. However, he also notes that this idealism is tempered by *realpolitik*; when Russia is slighted, the overreaction is often severe, but he does not believe that Eurasianism exists in Russian foreign policy, which is problematic.¹⁵³ In contrast to Sakwa, T.A. Shakleyina and A.D. Bogaturov's analysis of realism in Russian foreign policy allows room to relate Russian realism and Official Eurasianism. For instance, in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, Russian realists posited that Russia would maintain its important position for two reasons: (1) Russia has a stabilizing role within Eurasia; (2) Russia is the geopolitical bridge between Europe and Asia.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Solovyev, "Geopolitics in Russia," 88-89.

¹⁵² Д.А. Медведев, "Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации," November 5, 2008, http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2008/11/05/1349_type63372type63374type63381type82634_208749.shtml

¹⁵³ Richard Sakwa, " 'New Cold War' or twenty years' crisis? Russia and international politics," *International Affairs* 84, no. 2 (2008): 245.

¹⁵⁴ Shakletina and Bogaturov, "The Russian Realist school," 45.

Unlike Richard Sakwa, who believes that the concept of Eurasianism “has almost lost any intellectual coherence”¹⁵⁵ because there are so many strands of Eurasianist thinking, Robert Legvold acknowledges that the subtle differences in Eurasianist thinking are important and allow for a great understanding of Russian foreign policy behavior. For instance, Legvold writes that not all Eurasianists are anti-Western, and favor cooperation with Europe and the United States; however, the post-Soviet space is seen as the top priority in this frame of reference.¹⁵⁶

Russia’s belief in its great power status (*derzhava*) is a vital factor in how the Russian state is organized internally, and determines how Russia treats the Near Abroad states. These countries are an important factor in Russia’s great power status, as they are seen as key factors for world stability.

From Ivan IV’s to Putin’s day, Russia has worn its great power status on its sleeve, and, when called into question, its leaders and essayists sink into a narcissistic preoccupation with the country’s decline. The Russians even have a name for it: *derzhavnost*, from the Russian word for “power.” *Derzhavnost*, however, has a meaning all its own, one missing from the English language because the phenomenon is missing. Only the Russians in moments of distress revert to an affection of great-power standing—that is, to asserting their natural right to the role and influence of a great power whether they have the wherewithal or not.¹⁵⁷

The overall theme of this quote is indicative of the preoccupation within Russia for its great power status and influence, even where it has seemingly failed. Great power status, or *derzhava* is an important element of Official Eurasianism. Within Russia, *derzhava* is maintained both internally, through government structure, and externally, through the military.

¹⁵⁵ Sakwa “‘New Cold War,’” 244.

¹⁵⁶ Robert Legvold “Russian Foreign Policy During Periods of Great State Transformation,” in *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century and the Shadow of the Past*, ed. Robert Legvold (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 111.

¹⁵⁷ Legvold “Russian Foreign Policy During Periods of Great State Transformation,” 114.

The means to maintain the internal stability of the country is through prudently authoritarian leadership. In this view, Russia's strength is guaranteed by the "power vertical," with all authority ultimately resting in the hands of the president. In the 2001 Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Putin spoke of the importance of building this power vertical, because this mechanism would be the best means to ensure the implementation of state decisions, and would also supposedly be the most effective way to protect the rights of Russian citizens. The year prior, Putin sanctioned the creation of seven federal districts with appointed presidential plenipotentiaries to bring the regions more in line with the centre, and clearly to help create the power vertical.¹⁵⁸ With all control centered in the hands of the President, ensuring key goals are met are much easier, because there is no room for opposition.

As the chart indicates, Official Eurasianism envisions the post-Soviet states (the Near Abroad) as areas of vital interest. The Near Abroad countries directly influence Russia's internal stability, and Russia must uphold order in these countries; however, use of force is not the preferred method, but will be used if necessary; thus the military represents an important method for ensuring *derzhava*, as it is a means to project power into the Near Abroad. As such, Russia must have a strong military with nuclear capabilities, modernized conventional forces, and rapid-reaction forces to respond to crises on its border; as well, borders with the Near Abroad must remain transparent.¹⁵⁹

A strong military is an important mechanism to ensure that Russia continues its neoimperial role in the Near Abroad. During Putin, and now under Medvedev, important military reforms have taken place, because Russia's prosperity and peaceful development

¹⁵⁸ В.В. Путин, "Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации." April 3, 2001, http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2001/04/03/0000_type63372type63374type82634_28514.shtml

¹⁵⁹ Tsygankov, "From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism," 256.

depends upon having a strong, professional and well-equipped army. Furthermore, this army must be able to defend Russia and its allies—in dangerous areas and local conflicts—as well as work effectively with other armies from other countries in fighting towards common goals. There is a strong emphasis on the necessity of equipping the army with modern weapons, and the importance of modernizing and consolidating Russia's nuclear arsenal. The importance of maneuverable combat units with access to high precision weapons is also stressed, and this becomes very important in the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008. The rationale for strengthening the military is so that Russia can protect itself from external aggression, as well as conflict zones in Russia's immediate vicinity; that is, within the borders of CIS countries.¹⁶⁰

In order to maintain the equilibrium between east and west as a bridge state, Russia must retain its great power status. Shakleyina and Bogaturov acknowledge the importance of Russia's great power status: “*velikoderzhavnost*’ (commitment to great power status) is at the heart of the culture and psyche of Russia. This cultural archetype will continue to shape Russia's perceptions of international events, regardless of its internal conditions. Russia remains and will remain a great power.”¹⁶¹ According to Official Eurasianism, Russia is a neoimperial state, that ultimately desires for the “states located in the Near Abroad [to] reintegrate with Russia [so] it will reacquire its historical borders...such a process will take time and...Russia [should] abstain from using military force to facilitate its happening.”¹⁶² Integration with the CIS is crucial for several

¹⁶⁰ Путин, “Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации,” May 16, 2003; В.В. Путин, “Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации,” May 26, 2004, http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2004/05/26/0003_type63372type63374type82634_71501.shtml; Путин, “Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации,” May 10, 2006.

¹⁶¹ Shakleyina and Bogaturov, “The Russian Realist school,” 49.

¹⁶² Tsygankov, “From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism,” 255.

reasons. To start, it would reverse what Putin dubbed the greatest geopolitical disaster of the century: namely, the collapse of the Soviet Union. His further elaboration upon the fate of the CIS countries highlight Russia's neoimperial intentions. Russia is bound, he says, to the former Soviet Republics, by common history, through the Russian language, and by a great shared culture. Also important is the ethnic Russians living within the borders of other CIS countries as a tool to bind the CIS to Russia further.¹⁶³

Also worth noting, he states that Russia will continue its civilizing mission within Eurasia in order to strengthen and enrich this historic community. The language of a "civilizing mission" is clear imperial discourse. An example of Russia's neoimperial discourse pertaining to the CIS is Russia's dislike of other countries intervening in the Near Abroad. For instance, in 2006, Putin stresses yet again the importance of the CIS, and the positive role that Russia plays in diffusing tension in the post-Soviet space. Again, he notes that a major aim of Russian foreign policy is in relation to these countries.¹⁶⁴ Russia does not take kindly to other countries or groups attempting to infiltrate Russia's sphere of influence. As such, Russia views NATO enlargement very negatively, believing it to be a provocation against Russia that reduces the level of mutual trust in the international arena.¹⁶⁵

The CIS countries are very important for Russia to maintain its great power status, and its role at the international level. The speech Putin gives at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy determines exactly how Russia view unilateralism as a

¹⁶³ В.В. Путин, "Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации," April 25, 2005, http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/04/25/1223_type63372type63374type82634_87049.shtml; В.В. Путин, "Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации," May 16, 2003,

http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2003/05/16/1259_type63372type63374type82634_44623.shtml

¹⁶⁴ В.В. Путин, "Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации," May 10, 2006, http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2006/05/10/1357_type63372type63374type82634_105546.shtml

¹⁶⁵ В.В. Путин, "Выступление и дискуссия на Мюнхенской конференции по вопросам политики безопасности," February 10, 2007, <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2007/02/118097.shtml>

threat to world security, when he singles out the United States as over-stepping “its national boundaries in all spheres.”¹⁶⁶ Given the fact that the Rose and Orange Revolutions had also recently occurred, and Western NGOs played a critical role in preparing civil society for these peaceful demonstrations, Putin is likely also commenting about the United States’ involvement in Russia’s Near Abroad as being inappropriate.

Putin also once again asserts the importance of the United Nations, where Russia has veto power, in determining when it is appropriate to use military force. He stresses the importance of national interests and the supremacy of international law. The most important mechanism for the international system is the United Nations and the Security Council. It is crucial to note that Russia has veto power on the Security Council. This is a mechanism to ensure that Russia has not only a voice in international affairs, but also power to control the direction of the emerging world order.¹⁶⁷

Directly tied within this idea of CIS integration and the disaster of the Soviet collapse is the plight of Russians in the post-Soviet states. Putin assured these hundreds of thousands of Russians living and working outside of Russia that Russia would not abandon them; the Russian government would ensure their personal rights and families are protected from potential violations of the law, from unlawful pressure, and would help ensure that human rights are upheld.¹⁶⁸

What is clear within Official Eurasianism is that Russia should play an neoimperial role in the Near Abroad. Russia is a leader amongst post-Soviet states, and

¹⁶⁶ Путин, “Выступление и дискуссия на Мюнхенской конференции по вопросам политики безопасности,” February 10, 2007.

¹⁶⁷ Путин, “Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации,” May 16, 2003.
Путин, “Выступление и дискуссия на Мюнхенской конференции по вопросам политики безопасности,” February 10, 2007.

¹⁶⁸ Путин. “Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации.” April 3, 2001.

an international great power; therefore, they refuse to accept the guidance of western institutions, such as NATO and the EU, which are active in other post-communist countries. While other post-communist states attached involvement with these organizations as signs of freedom and democracy, for Russia it symbolized the exact opposite.¹⁶⁹

Putin's presidency, and the beginning of Medvedev's presidency show a neoimperialistic attitude towards the former Soviet states. The attempt to control and manipulate neighboring states of the Near Abroad is often handled through economic means. Where Russia was challenged, for instance during the "colored revolutions," it fought back. As Legvold writes, Putin regarded the meddling of western countries and institutions "as mischievous, if not malevolent. The West's professed commitment to promoting democratic change was at best a careless challenge to stability in the region and at worse a conscious effort to weaken Russian influence, perhaps even to subvert Russia itself by organizing another "colored" revolution."¹⁷⁰

These revolutions are a clear threat to Russian hegemony in the region, particularly because it opens Eurasia to other geopolitical actors vis-à-vis NATO enlargement.¹⁷¹ Angela Stent notes that the Orange and Rose Revolutions negatively affected Russia's relationship with both the United States and the European Community

¹⁶⁹ Sakwa, "New Cold War," 243.

¹⁷⁰ Legvold, "Russian Foreign Policy During Periods of Great State Transformation," 122.

¹⁷¹ The colored revolutions represent a threat to Russia's ability to retain *derzhava* because they open Eurasia to other geopolitical actors. Although Georgia has a relationship with NATO that dates back to 1992, it was only after the Rose Revolution that membership became a serious possibility. For instance, in 2006, Georgia was granted Intensive Dialogue (ID) Stage, which is an important step towards membership, and in 2008, the question of Membership Action Plan (MAP) was actively discussed at the Bucharest Summit. For Russia, this is a severe threat. Without the Near Abroad, Russia will lose *derzhava* internationally and regionally, and this could severely impact the internal structure of the Russian state. For instance, historically Russia had to control the Southern Caucasus in order to retain control over the North Caucasus, which is within Russia's borders. This will be further discussed later in this chapter.

because they confirmed to Russia that these countries are attempting to stifle Russia's role on the international stage and in its own backyard. These democratic coups are seen as threats to Russia's internal stability, because the Russian governments fears that foreign influences will help to foster a similar situation within Russia. As well, these colored revolutions are seen as a means to curb Russia's influence within the international order.¹⁷²

Georgian Foreign Policy

The Rose Revolution of 2003 sent an important message about Georgia's aspirations to become a democratic, western-style country. As it is written in the *National Security Concept of Georgia*: "The Rose Revolution...once again demonstrated that democracy and liberty are part of the Georgian traditional values that are of vital necessity to the people of Georgia...[which is] an integral part of the European political, economic and cultural area, whose fundamental national values are rooted in European values and traditions."¹⁷³ This document, and the *Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009* will help me identify important key themes for Georgian foreign policy, which I will elaborate upon using speeches (such as the Annual Address to Parliament 2005-2008) and interviews given by President Saakashvili. These key areas include: independence, ensuring territorial integrity, and democracy/Euro-Atlantic integration.

¹⁷² Angela Stent, "Reluctant Europeans: Three Centuries of Russian Ambivalence Toward the West," in *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century and the Shadow of the Past*, ed. Robert Legvold, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 428.

¹⁷³ *National Security Concept of Georgia*.

Independence

As a sovereign, independent state, Georgia resists, rejects, and does not appreciate the interference of other states in its internal affairs.¹⁷⁴ Georgia's defining moment of independence came with the Rose Revolution. President Saakashvili's Annual Report to Parliament in 2005 mentions this. Not only did Georgia choose freedom and a new democratic orientation, the Rose Revolution also symbolized a "complex and ambitious road towards regaining the motherland that had been lost and taken away from us."¹⁷⁵ He also says that for the first time in its modern history, "Georgia is a proper state."¹⁷⁶ In his Dinner Speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy in 2006, President Saakashvili echoes this.

In his 2006 report to Parliament, Saakashvili discusses the progress Georgia has made in terms of development: an efficient state apparatus, strong institutions, and a well functioning law-enforcement system, including a strong army. He also makes an interesting point that Georgia is diversifying its gas suppliers, so as to no longer be completely dependent on Russia; earlier that year, gas pipeline explosions in Russia left Georgia without heat and electricity in January. It is strongly believed that Russia was responsible and was attempting to subjugate Georgia using gas as a weapon. This will be further discussed in the next section, which explicitly deals with NATO enlargement.

According to the resistance identity model, Georgia casts Russia as its primary threat to independence. Saakashvili's 2007 report to Parliament is indicative of this. In

¹⁷⁴ *National Security Concept of Georgia.*

¹⁷⁵ Mikheil Saakashvili, "Annual Report to Parliament." February 10, 2008, http://www.president.gov.ge/print_txt.php?id=149&l=E

¹⁷⁶ Saakashvili, "Annual Report to Parliament." February 10, 2008.

this speech, he lists all the sanctions Russia imposed on Georgia, including travel bans, the deportation of Georgians from Russia, and a full economic blockade.¹⁷⁷ Like the issues of gas transport, this will be elaborated upon and analyzed in the forthcoming NATO enlargement segment of this chapter. For now, let it suffice to say that Russia used these mechanisms as a way to attempt to influence Georgian internal politics.

In the aftermath of the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, Saakashvili's 2008 report to Parliament is indicative of Georgia's deep distrust towards Russia. He accuses Russia of trying to "totally destroy Georgia."¹⁷⁸ He also insists that his government tried to warn the international community that Russia was preparing such an attack against Georgian statehood. The events leading up to the war, the war itself and its aftermath will be discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

Ensuring territorial Integrity

The Georgian government is dedicated to restoring and maintaining the country's sovereignty. Furthermore, the government is committed to ensuring that Georgia's internationally recognized borders are safe and stable.¹⁷⁹ The *Foreign Policy Strategy of 2006-2009* elaborates upon this, stating that Georgia's stability and territorial integrity rests upon resolving the frozen conflicts. Aside from indicating that peace plans with South Ossetia and Abkhazia are being developed, the document also lists internationalizing the peacekeeping forces as a major aim: "Impartial peacekeeping

¹⁷⁷ Mikheil Saakashvili, "Annual Report to Parliament." March 15, 2007, http://www.president.gov.ge/print_txt.php?id=2164&l=E

¹⁷⁸ Saakashvili, "Annual Report to Parliament." September 16, 2008.

¹⁷⁹ *National Security Concept of Georgia*.

forces represent a necessary precondition for avoiding resumption of hostilities. Georgia's diplomatic service will actively work towards internationalization of peacekeeping forces in conflict zones."¹⁸⁰

In his 2005 report to the Parliament, Saakashvili is rather subtle in his references to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He says at one point: "For the first time in recent history we are beginning to have a moderately sized but modernized armed forces. It is very important for the nation to be a proud nation and for its unification."¹⁸¹ Again, in 2006 a similar link is made between the army and unity, when he states that the armed forces will fight to defend Georgia's territorial integrity, if forced to do so.¹⁸² It seems that a link is being made between military strength and the reintegration of the separatist regions, which becomes very important when analyzing the August 2008 war with Russia.

At the Munich Conference in 2006, Saakashvili is less cryptic and more straightforward in regards to the separatist conflicts. He lists the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity as a major pillar of Georgia's national security. He further indicates that "the cancer of separatism [that Georgia] inherited from [its] past"¹⁸³ can best be remedied through Euro-Atlantic integration. He elaborates on this, saying that these unstable areas within Georgia represent instability and threats for Europe in general. His belief is that the best way to bring Abkhazia and South Ossetia back to Georgia is by

¹⁸⁰ Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009*, 7.
http://www.mfa.gov.ge/files/115_1973_997704_Strategy_MFA2006-2009En.pdf

¹⁸¹ Mikheil Saakashvili, "Annual Report to Parliament," February 10, 2005,
http://www.president.gov.ge/print_txt.php?id=1491&l=E

¹⁸² Mikheil Saakashvili, "Annual Report to Parliament," February 14, 2006.
http://www.president.gov.ge/print_txt/php?id=1451&l=E

¹⁸³ Mikheil Saakashvili, "Dinner-Speech: Georgia's Role in International Security Policy," *Munich Conference on Security Policy*, February 3, 2006,
<http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?sprache=en&id=163&>

extending Euro-Atlantic values and practices into these regions, and by acting as a united front¹⁸⁴.

In his 2006 address to the Parliament, Saakashvili is very adamant about the role Russia' plays in the separatist conflicts. He outright says there are attempts being made to annex Georgian territory, and although he never once says Russia is responsible for this, it is very clear that this is directed against Russia. He also states that there is no ethnic conflict in Georgia with the Ossetians and Abkhaz, but rather territorial disputes that are about "the division of post-imperial space and about where one former large empire's territory ends."¹⁸⁵ This sentiment about Russia is echoed in his 2007 speech. He is also insistent that Georgia's aim is peaceful reunification and the internationalization of the peacekeeping forces because of Russia's role in fostering the conflicts. Saakashvili says: "We want the European institutions and the United States to participate in this [peacekeeping] much more actively. The current peacekeeping format has been discredited, it is ineffective and everyone understands now that it is effectively impossible to maintain it in this form."¹⁸⁶

Democracy/Euro-Atlantic Integration

According to the *National Security Concept*, "Georgia, as a Black Sea and South-Eastern European state, has historically been a geographic, political and cultural part of Europe."¹⁸⁷ Aside from the important identity-driven symbolism, NATO membership

¹⁸⁴ Saakashvili, "Dinner-Speech: Georgia's Role in International Security Policy," February 3, 2006.

¹⁸⁵ Saakashvili, "Annual Report to Parliament," February 14, 2006.

¹⁸⁶ Saakashvili, "Annual Report to Parliament," March 15, 2007.

¹⁸⁷ *National Security Concept of Georgia*.

would provide Georgia with regional and national security. Military reform, along Euro-Atlantic lines, is a major aim of the *Foreign Policy Strategy*, as it provides the means to not only enhance Georgia's security, but also the means to respond to new threats, such as trafficking, terrorism and money laundering. Georgia in NATO would also help reinforce security in the Black Sea and Southeastern regions of Europe, which would increase Georgia's regional stability. NATO is also a means to strengthen democracy in Georgia.¹⁸⁸

Georgia's European orientation is highly emphasized in Saakashvili's speeches. For instance, in his 2006 Munich Speech, he states: "Georgia has firmly established itself as a sound and legitimate democracy that looks, acts and functions like any normal European country."¹⁸⁹ In his 2007 speech to Parliament, he states that "Georgia is returning to its historical European family. We are not simply Europeans, we are the oldest Europeans. Europe is coming back to Georgia just the way that Georgia is returning to Europe."¹⁹⁰ He appeals to mythology (the search for the Golden Fleece, and Prometheus), and the importance of Christianity in the sense that Georgia adopted it very early and supposedly help spread it to other Christian countries to prove his point. He also states very realistically that Europe represents for Georgia a very important political vector in terms of foreign policy orientation. In his 2008 Munich Speech, Saakashvili further appeals to and justifies Georgia's Europeaness: "Our decision to look West made

¹⁸⁸ *Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009*, 8-9; *National Security Concept of Georgia*.

¹⁸⁹ Saakashvili, "Dinner-Speech: Georgia's Role in International Security Policy," February 3, 2006.

¹⁹⁰ Saakashvili, "Annual Report to Parliament," March 15, 2007.

sense for Georgia. We are joined by a common and unbreakable bond—one based on culture—on our shared history and identity—and on a common set of values.”¹⁹¹

Along with Georgia being an integral part of Europe, the speeches stress the importance of Euro-Atlantic integration, particularly with NATO. Within this, Saakashvili often stresses that Georgia is not simply wanting security from NATO, but can contribute to security as well. There is also a strong belief that NATO can help Georgia safeguard its own borders. For instance, in his 2006 address, Saakashvili boasts that Georgia’s military is one of the best equipped in the region, despite its small size. He also elaborates that NATO membership will mean that Georgia is part of NATO’s borders. “Our brazen former brothers will not be able to cross this border unpunished as they have been doing in recent times and in particular in recent years.”¹⁹² In 2007, military capabilities are also addressed, insofar as Georgia’s reforms to its military have brought it to within NATO standards.¹⁹³ In his 2008 Munich speech, Saakashvili stresses that Georgia is a partner within the alliance, which has been proven by its participation in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. Georgia credits this strong engagement with NATO to Partnership for Peace and ID stage. He also insists that there is room to work towards NATO, while pursuing a peaceful relationship with Russia.¹⁹⁴

After the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, this conciliatory tone is not evident in Saakashvili’s speech to Parliament. However, he shows great optimism about Georgia’s place in the world community: “For the first time in our history, the

¹⁹¹ Mikheil Saakashvili, “Speech at the 44th Annual Munich Conference on Security Policy,” *Munich Conference on Security Policy*, February 9, 2008,

<http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede/php?id=214&sprache=en&>

¹⁹² Saakashvili, “Annual Report to Parliament,” February 14, 2006.

¹⁹³ Saakashvili, “Annual Report to Parliament,” March 15, 2007.

¹⁹⁴ Saakashvili, “Speech at the 44th Annual Munich Conference on Security Policy,” February 9, 2008.

whole civilized society stood together as a whole to protect Georgia. For the first time in our history, the fortune, freedom and independence of our country matters for the rest of the world. Each new day proves that Georgia has its own noble place in the Commonwealth of Nations. This confirms that we have made the right choice is choosing our allies.”¹⁹⁵ He also pledges further democratic reforms for Georgia, the most important one involving the removal of presidential powers to dissolve parliament. He also pledges judicial reform to ensure a stronger, more independent, and more free judiciary. He justifies these reforms by stating: “A hastened democratic process is a process leading to Euro-Atlantic integration and Georgia’s victory. More democracy is Georgia’s response to Russian aggression.”¹⁹⁶

NATO Case Study

Georgia’s desire to join NATO is viewed with suspicion by Moscow, which sees NATO expansion onto former Soviet territory, and onto Russia’s borders, as antagonistic policies inherited from the Cold War, which ultimately serve to threaten Russian security. Furthermore, the Russian leadership contends that NATO expansion is not motivated by security, and will create new dividing lines in Europe. Russia’s attitude towards NATO enlargement in Georgia raises two very important issues. First, Russia is attempting to dictate how a sovereign country pursues its foreign and security policy, for reasons that have been clearly established earlier in this chapter. Second, Russia’s rationalization of NATO as a potential aggressor is based in the zero-sum thinking of the government,

¹⁹⁵ Saakashvili, “Annual Report to Parliament,” September 16, 2008.

¹⁹⁶ Saakashvili, “Annual Report to Parliament,” September 16, 2008.

rather than actual realistic policies.¹⁹⁷ Russia views NATO enlargement as a threat against its regional and international role.

NATO membership is attractive to Georgia for several reasons. First, it would provide security against Russian meddling, particularly in the frozen conflict areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia has cast Russia as their largest external security threat, largely because Georgian national identity is based upon independence from Russian interference. Within Georgia, the idea of Russia as the largest external threat to Georgian independence and sovereignty has become deeply entrenched. For instance, in an interview with *Georgia Today*, Alexander Rondeli, President of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, stated:

The final goal for Georgia is to become a stable and viable state and to be accepted as a full-fledged member in the family of European Nations. One of the biggest challenges for Georgia's foreign policy is relation with Russia. The Russian Federation has its own view on Georgia's role in the region. Russia's interest in Georgia remains the same: to control this country. But today the Russians are more realistic and instead of full control they think about having weak Georgia dependent on Russia and cut off from the West....But one element of this policy towards Georgia is quite serious—continuation of the control over the separatist territories that makes Georgia weak and hinders economic development, democratization in Georgia and makes Georgia more dependent on Russia....Russia's policy towards Georgia is simple: intimidation, blackmail and pressure....Russia's goals towards Georgia remain the same: not to let Georgia to join NATO. Russia's wants to stay in Georgia militarily and politically.¹⁹⁸

NATO membership, while forcing the country to modernize militarily, would also force Georgia to firmly establish the rule of law and help foster democracy within the country. The NATO Partnership for Peace Program has played an instrumental role in both state and defense reform. Also, the NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan

¹⁹⁷ Haltzel, Hearing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, March 4, 2008.

¹⁹⁸ Nini Bakradze, "Russia's Policy Towards Georgia in Simple-Intimidation, Blackmail and Pressure," *Georgia Today*, February 11, 2007, <http://www.gfsis.org/pub/eng/showpub.php?detail=1&id=146>

(IPAP) has helped to accelerate state reforms.¹⁹⁹ Being as the government elite desire Euro-Atlantic integration and association with the west, this is very important. It is worth noting that Georgia's desire to be a liberal democracy stems from a desire to prove that it can be a modern, Western style nation state, without heavy dependence on Russia. This is also deeply related to the resistance identity concept.

Russia, however, views Georgia's potential NATO membership very negatively, and is opposed to NATO expansion into former Soviet space. Vladimir Putin's speech at the 43rd Annual Munich Conference on Security Policy is but one example of this. In this speech, he said: "I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended?"²⁰⁰

Historically, Georgia was crucial for Russian military excursion and eventual conquering of the North Caucasus. A similar pattern is seen in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse. Before attempting to subdue the Chechen rebels in the 1990s, Russia first sought to secure its control over the South Caucasus. Important elements of Russia's plan in this regard included Georgian CIS membership, which was secured during the tumultuous period of the Georgian civil war, where Georgia, in desperation, sought Russia's help. Russian aid also secured two more of Russia's interests regarding

¹⁹⁹ Damien Helly and Giorgi Gogia, "Georgian Security and the Role of the West." In *Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, eds. Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold (Cambridge and Longon: MIT Press, 2005), 284-295.

²⁰⁰ Путин, "Выступление и дискуссия на Мюнхенской конференции по вопросам политики безопасности," February 10, 2007.

Georgia: it allowed them to guard the border with Turkey, and the establishment of Russian military bases within Georgia, which were only withdrawn in 2006.²⁰¹

The establishment of a very clear formula towards the Near Abroad characterized Putin's engagement with Georgia. In this way, Russia wanted to send a clear signal that the South Caucasus was Russian domain. Re-launching the war in Chechnya was Putin's way of strengthening the status of the Russian state and restoring Russian stability, as the perception in Moscow was that the defeat in Chechnya was single-handedly responsible for the loss of Russian prestige. It was believed that the loss in Chechnya also prevented Russia from exerting the control it desired within the South Caucasus and Georgia. Re-engaging with Chechnya was thus seen as a way to project power in the South Caucasus.²⁰² Once Chechnya was finally subdued and the threat of secession quelled, Russia no longer had to be concerned for its support of Georgia's breakaway regions. The border was reopened with Abkhazia and new visa requirements that affected Georgia were not put into effect for the citizens of Abkhazian and South Ossetia. Furthermore, Moscow granted Russian citizenship to the residents of these regions.²⁰³

For Russia, it is difficult to simply disengage from territories, which historically were part of Russia, and then part of the Soviet Union, particularly when these territories are defecting to the west. Russia's desire to be present in the affairs of Georgia is deeply rooted in Russia's collective identity, which has its roots in imperial great power politics, as well as its Cold War status. When the USSR collapsed, Russia reverted back to its

²⁰¹ Svante E. Cornell, "Georgia After the Rose Revolution: Geopolitical Predicaments and Implications for U.S. Policy" *Silk Road Studies* (February 2007), 18-21, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=757>; Svante E. Cornell, "Security Threats and Challenges in the Caucasus after 9/11," in *Eurasia in Balance: the US and the Regional Power Shift*, ed. Ariel Cohen (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 58.

²⁰² Cornell, "Georgia After the Rose Revolution," 18, 23-25.

²⁰³ Coppieters, "Locating Georgian Security," 378.

imperial past in order to attempt to create a new identity.²⁰⁴ Historically, Georgia is an important region for Russia, which Russia will not give up without a fight.

As such, the role of the CIS, particularly in military terms, has been to counter NATO influence in Russia's near abroad, and the organization has a particular agenda as it pertains to countries that are within Russia's traditional sphere of influence (the former Soviet republics). The CIS mandate is to promote integration with former Soviet Republics; however, the reality is that Russia treats the CIS members as though these countries are exclusively within Russia's sphere of influence, which other international actors should not have access to.²⁰⁵

Russia believes that NATO expansion is not about increasing security. Rather, Moscow views NATO expansion as a means to exclude Russia from the international and European stages. NATO is seen as a means to limit Russia's influence in the region, and to curb Russia's rise as a regional power. Furthermore, the organization's expansion is seen as a means of creating new dividing lines in Europe, bringing NATO military forces to Russia's doorstep. NATO expansion is also humiliating for Russia because it denies Russia space to act in the changing European security context. Another important aspect is that Russia views NATO expansion as reneging upon the promise NATO General Secretary Woerner made in 1990, when he stated that NATO would not expand beyond Germany.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Devdariani, "Georgia and Russia," 156.

²⁰⁵ Luis Jose Rodriguez Leitao Tome, "Russia and NATO's Enlargement," *NATO Research Fellowship Programme 1998-2000* (June 2000); Andrei P. Tsygankov, "Georgia is a Victim of NATO Expansion," *Johnson's Russia List*, 15 October 2006, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2006-232-42.cfm>; "65th Rose Roth Seminar in Tbilisi, Georgia," *NATO PA Seminar Report*, April 19-21, 2007, Paragraph 37. <http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=1209>

²⁰⁶ Tome, "Russia and NATO's Enlargement," Tsygankov, "Georgia is a Victim of NATO Expansion," October 15, 2006.

When Georgia entered into the Intensified Dialogue (ID) stage with NATO, Russia quickly reacted by imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Georgia. This included banning Georgian wine and mineral water, which constituted the major Georgian exports to Russia. In order to supposedly combat illegal migration, Russia stopped issuing visas for Georgian migrant workers, in an attempt to economically punish the country. Many ethnic Georgians were also deported from Russia. Postal links, as well as air, sea, land and railway travel, were completely suspended from Russia to Georgia. Furthermore, all money transfers to Georgia were also banned. The money from Georgian migrant workers sent back to Georgia amounted to approximately \$350 million per year prior to the ban, resulting in serious implications for the Georgian economy. Russia's official reason for cutting ties with Georgia was claimed to be the arrest of four Russian military personnel who were accused by the Georgian government of being spies. They were arrested and promptly deported from Georgia.²⁰⁷

Georgia is largely dependent on Russia for energy imports, and Gazprom certainly takes advantage of the political situation to prove Russian foreign policy points. In 2006, once again after Georgia entered the ID stage in NATO, gas supplies from Russia were cut off for one week due to two explosions on the Mozdoc-Tbilisi pipeline in North Ossetia. Electricity transmission was also disrupted, at the same time as the natural gas incident, due to a separate explosion in the Karakayevo-Cherkessiya region. While the Russians insist that Chechen rebels are responsible for the explosions that left Georgia without natural gas and 25% of its electricity for one week, the Georgian

²⁰⁷ Jibladze, "Russia's Opposition to Georgia's Quest for NATO Membership," 47; Kurt Bodewig, acting rapporteur, "Economic and Political Transition in Georgia," *NATO PA Committee Report*, 170 ESCEW 07 E rev 2, 2007 paragraph 42, <http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=1171>; Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 141.

government strongly believes that Russia is responsible. Another important energy related factor is that Gazprom has yet again raised the price of gas exports to Georgia. While Gazprom claims that it is merely equalizing the price to reflect market conditions (and this could be true), the timing and style of these announcements has been quite suspicious and lend themselves well to discussions of Russia using energy resources as political leverage. The result of these energy games has not been in Russia's favor, however. Georgia is now diversifying where it receives natural gas, although Russia still accounts for 80% of Georgia's natural gas.²⁰⁸

Russia also exercises hard power tactics via "military saber-rattling which mainly involves military exercises and minor irritants."²⁰⁹ Russian aircrafts have often violated Georgian airspace, an action that according to Edward Lucas, is done to test Georgia's defense mechanisms. Any Georgian complaints are brushed off, with Russia claiming either that the unauthorized flight did not occur, or that it was simply an error. However, Georgia's air defense system is virtually non-existent, thus Russian incursions into their airspace are viewed with alarm.²¹⁰ Despite Russia's many attempts to interfere in Georgian affairs, using energy or hard power tactics, the attempts to bully Georgia into compliance have failed miserably. They have had the exact opposite effect; rather than intimidate Georgia and force them back to Russia, Russian actions have pushed Georgia even further on their westward path.

One area where Russia is able to interfere in Georgian affairs successfully is via the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These conflicts are Russia's key chip for meddling in Georgian affairs. Support for these areas has taken many forms,

²⁰⁸ Bodewig, acting rapporteur, "Economic and Political Transition in Georgia," paragraphs 46, 47, and 48

²⁰⁹ Lucas, *The New Cold War*, 144.

²¹⁰ Lucas, *The New Cold War*, 144-145.

including political. For instance, when South Ossetia held a referendum for independence, the Russian government passed a resolution acknowledging the results. Russian officials also attended the inauguration of the de-facto president of the region after internationally unrecognized elections were held in South Ossetia. Russia has also granted Russian citizenship to people in both separatist regions.²¹¹

Russia's support for the separatist regions is also economic. During the Soviet period, Abkhazia was famous for tourism and agriculture. After its split with Georgia, the economy completely collapsed, leaving Abkhazia wholly dependent on the Russian ruble, Russian economic aid, and Russian markets. South Ossetia's economic position is much worse than Abkhazia's. The Roki Tunnel, which links Georgia and Russia, is the only economically viable asset in the region. The customs duties, which are levied here, comprise one-third of South Ossetia's budget. Given that Georgia cut off electricity to the region, it is now even more dependent upon Russia for survival.²¹² Russia is also able to help South Ossetia and Abkhazia by providing them with subsidized gas from Gazprom (while forcing Georgia to pay whatever Gazprom demands). Another dimension tying Russia to South Ossetia and Abkhazia is that the soldiers and peacekeepers stationed to protect the de facto borders are paid in rubles, which further ties their economies to that of Russia's.²¹³

As such, Russia's role in the Georgian frozen conflicts can be viewed as both party to, and arbiter of, the conflicts, because Russia is also involved as a peacekeeper in the area. Georgia is also wary of Russia's role as peacekeepers in the separatist regions,

²¹¹ Jibladze, "Russia's Opposition to Georgia's Quest for NATO Membership," 46.

²¹² Bodewig, acting rapporteur, "Economic and Political Transition in Georgia," Paragraphs 23-24.

²¹³ Dov Lynch, "Separatist states and post-Soviet conflicts," *International Affairs* 78, no. 4 (2004): 837, 839, 841.

which Russia will not allow to be internationalized. Under the CIS mandate, Russian peacekeepers (CISPKF) are the only troops who are actively involved in the mission to Abkhazia, while South Ossetia is monitored by Georgia, Ossetian and Russian peacekeepers. Russia's military presence in the regions allows the separatist to refuse to negotiate a political settlement with Georgia. Furthermore, Russia has also exported its own political system into the separatist regions, which is highlighted by authoritarian leadership, illegal criminal activity and shadowy business deals, all intertwined to control government policy and the economy.²¹⁴ In essence, Moscow has "dropped any pretense of neutrality in the conflict...[and] began appointing Russian officers to the military and security services of the self-styled governments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia."²¹⁵

Abkhazia, in particular, represents an area of strategic interest to Russia. According to Dmitry Trenin, "Russia will continue to expand communications with Abkhazia and to include it in projects of preparation for Sochi Olympiad..."²¹⁶ A more obvious and strategic reason that Abkhazia is so important for Russia is Abkhazia's Black Sea coast location. Russia only has one port with access to the Black Sea at Novorossiysk, and the potential future prospects of Ukraine NATO membership severely limit the options of a Russian Black Sea Fleet, because NATO members would surround the entire Black Sea. This would severely limit Russia's naval abilities. Because of the

²¹⁴ Vladimir Socor, "The Frozen Conflicts: A Challenge to Euro-Atlantic Interests," *Jamestown Foundation* 2004, <http://www.jamestown.org/images/doc/KonstRon.doc>

²¹⁵ Cornell, "Georgia After the Rose Revolution," 28.

²¹⁶ Koba Bendeliani, "Dmitry Trenin: Two Dynamics-Georgia in NATO, Abkhazia and South Ossetia without Georgia-will essentially affect development of bilateral relations and make these relations even more tensed" *InterPressNews*, March 15, 2008, http://www.interpressnews.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=50200&info_id=212425

importance of Black Sea access, “Moscow should on no account allow the NATO war machine to swallow Abkhazia.”²¹⁷

In March 2008, after international recognition of Kosovo’s independence Russia officially lifted trade sanctions on Abkhazia, which were imposed by CIS member states in 1996. However, the reality is that there never really was a practical embargo on Abkhazia. For instance, Abkhazia was never included in the Russian ban on Georgian products.²¹⁸ However, just prior to the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, there was also a positive step in Russian-Georgian relations: the resumption of air travel between the two countries. According to Georgia’s Foreign Minister, David Bakradze: “The resumption of direct flights...is a positive step which Georgia welcomes sincerely. I hope it’s a first but not a last step...We also expect Russia to lift economic sanctions, visa and transport restrictions.”²¹⁹

However, once it was determined that the MAP question would be re-examined in December 2008, and that no decision would be rendered in April, the positive developments quickly ceased and extreme tension gripped the region, culminating in full war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008. As I argue in Chapter Three, the overtures to war began after the Bucharest Summit. One of the first provocative actions undertaken by Russia was to further “upgrade ties with the two separatist territories...a

²¹⁷ Leonid Ivashov, “Georgia: Heading for NATO. Abkhazia: a Union with Russia?” *Strategic Cultural Foundation*, February 7 2008, <http://en.fondsk.ru/article.php?id=1197>

²¹⁸ “Russia Lifts Sanctions from Abkhazia,” *Kommersant*, March 7 2008, <http://www.kommersant.com/doc.asp?id=864557>; “Russia lifts trade, economic, financial sanctions on Abkhazia,” *RIA Novosti*, March 6 2008, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20080306/100855697.html>;

²¹⁹ “Russia-Georgia air links to resume, but storm clouds grow,” *Todayonline*, March 25, 2008, <http://www.todayonline.com/articles/244635.asp>

move Georgia's government attacked as "creeping annexation aimed at barring the Caucasus nation from joining NATO."²²⁰

In April 2008, Russia's creeping annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia became all the more evident, when Russia opened direct trade, transportation and political links with both regions. As Cornell and Smith write, the following steps for Russia at this point included the opening of air and sea links between Russia and the separatist territories. They conclude that Russia's decision to officially open up direct political and economic relations with these regions effectively make South Ossetia and Abkhazia autonomous republics of the Russian Federation.²²¹ It is worthy to note that Russia's decision regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia came just one day after the UN Security Council adopted a resolution reiterating their support for Georgia's territorial integrity. What is interesting is that despite Russia's constant focus on the importance of the UN and the Security Council, and international law, this action indicates that the UN, Security Council and international law are only applicable when it is in Russia's favor.

Furthermore, there was a sense among some analysts that Russia's actions were meant to provoke the Georgian government into taking impulsive measures, which would then reflect poorly upon the prospects of MAP status in December.²²² This early analysis is very interesting, considering the events of August 2008, which will be discussed in depth in the next chapter. This article also notes the paradoxical stance of the Russian government—the belief that Moscow can still act as neutral broker in the peacekeeping

²²⁰ Marc Champion, "Russia to Bolster Ties to Separatist Areas in Georgia," *Georgian Daily*, April 17, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1133&Itemid=65

²²¹ Svante E. Cornell and David J. Smith, "Moscow Moves to De Facto Annexation of Georgian Breakaway Regions," *CACI Analyst* 10, no. 8 (April 16, 2008), 3-6.
<http://www.cacianalyst.org/files/080416Analyst.pdf>

²²² Molly Corso, "Georgia Holds Steady as Moscow Inches closer to Abkhazia, South Ossetia," *Eurasianet.org*, April 17, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041708c.shtml>

process. These events also seem in conflict with the earlier policy shift, aimed at ending Russia's transportation embargo against Georgia, which was hailed as a positive step in Russo-Georgian relations. However, according to Irakli Menagarishvili: "The only way to understand it is they realize the economic sanctions against Georgia failed to give them what they wanted...Now they shift to pressure [Georgia] through the separatist regions with the aim to [stop] Georgia's striving toward the West."²²³

Another major event to rattle Russian-Georgian relations involved Russian military jets shooting down a Georgian reconnaissance drone over Abkhazia in April 2008. This was later corroborated by a UN report in May²²⁴. Georgian officials and observers hoped that this event would prove Russia as the instigator of incidents in the conflict zone, and would further show that Russia was not an impartial observer in the conflicts. Furthermore, it was hoped that this event would again highlight Russia's aggressive behavior towards Georgia, and would be a factor for NATO's decision.²²⁵

In May, Russia increased their peacekeeping presence in Abkhazia without notifying Georgian authorities or the UN, which goes against the necessary protocol. As Davit Bakradze explained: "In order for a military force to be considered a peacekeeping force, there are certain rules. It should be agreed with the host country...If one does not follow those rules...it is hard to see this as a legitimate peacekeeping force. It is an illegitimate military presence."²²⁶ The Russians justified their increased presence by citing the need to protect their citizens living in Abkhazia. Clearly, this move was highly

²²³ Corso, "Georgia Holds Steady as Moscow Inches closer to Abkhazia, South Ossetia," April 17, 2008.

²²⁴ UNOMIG, "Report of UNOMIG on the Incident of 20 April Involving the Downing of a Georgian Unmanned Aerial Vehicle over the Zone of Conflict," May 26, 2008, http://www.unomig.org/data/other/080526_unomig_report.pdf

²²⁵ Nina Akhmeteli, "Georgia claims "clear proof" of Russian violation of airspace," *Eurasianet.org*, April 22, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav042208b.shtml>

²²⁶ Molly Corso, "Georgia: Russian peacekeeper buildup in Abkhazia "Illegitimate"—Official," *Eurasianet.org*, May 1, 2008. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav050108b.shtml>

provocative and indicative of Russia's policy of creeping annexation. Russia's actions towards Georgia in the immediate aftermath of the Bucharest Summit, but before the outbreak of war, indicate that Russia ultimately does not believe in Georgia's sovereignty; rather, Georgia belongs to Russia. There is a pattern of intimidation, abuse, and meddling.²²⁷

The belief of the Georgian government is that, ultimately, only NATO membership can ensure Georgian security vis-à-vis Russia, in particular, as it pertains to the frozen conflicts. Certainly, provisions within NATO regulations state that countries must have control over their entire territories, however, there are several NATO members that are embroiled in territorial disputes, such as Turkey and Greece over Cyprus, and Spain with the Basques. Therefore, the argument of critics of NATO enlargement and granting NATO map status remain rather moot.²²⁸

Furthermore, being as Russia is so invested in these separatist areas, and has essentially monopolized the peacekeeping apparatus, Georgia needs outside assistance to solve these conflicts. NATO is attractive for several reasons. It helps Georgia to remain focused on internal democratic reforms, which according to Alexander Rondeli, are key to ensuring stability within such an ethnically diverse country.²²⁹ However, the Russian government is keen on ensuring that should NATO accept Georgia, it will do so without Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which would then be a buffer between NATO and Russia. According to Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's ambassador to NATO: "If Georgia joins NATO,

²²⁷ Stephen Blank, "Commentary: Russia Versus NATO in the CIS," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* May 14, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1117479.html>

²²⁸ Temuri Yakobashvili and Jonathan Kulick, "Can Georgia Join NATO without Solving the Conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia," *Black Sea Paper Series* 3. http://www.gfsis.org/pub/files/publications_politics/Black_Sea_Paper_No.3_2010-16.pdf

²²⁹ Александр Рондели, "Грузия – Россия: к причине конфликта," *Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies*, December 20, 2006, <http://www.gfsis.org/pub/eng/showpub.php?detail=1&id=127>

Abkhazia and South Ossetia will not follow Tbilisi...Abkhazia will keep striving for independence from Georgia and South Ossetia is intending to join Russia...As soon as Georgia starts the process of entering NATO, it will lose half of its territory.”²³⁰ This sentiment is echoed, for example, by the parliamentary speaker of the Abkhaz separatist region, Nugzar Ashuba. “The sooner Georgia joins NATO, the sooner our independence will be recognized.”²³¹ This is not surprising, given that Russia has played a large role in appointing officials in the breakaway republics.

In the aftermath of the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, discussed in detail in the next chapter, Russia officially recognized the separatist regions, which is interesting considering Russia’s threats that if Georgia joins NATO it will do so without these territories. In his meeting with the Valdai Club in September 2008, President Medvedev addressed the NATO issues, and stated that Georgian NATO membership would destabilize the organization itself, as well as increase tensions in the region.²³²

While the decision for MAP in December was rejected, the Annual National Program (ANP) was implemented to help Georgia continue on the path towards reform. While it is not MAP, it is a step closer towards NATO.²³³ It is certain that the war affected this decision. For one, it showed Russia’s tenacity in fighting to keep its sphere of influence, and it also highlighted the inherent instability of the region. The volatile relationship between Russia and Georgia is a risk factor that NATO had to account for. Again, this will further be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

²³⁰ “Tbilisi wants Moscow to pay for ‘Georgian Kosovo,’” *Russia Today*, March 11 2008, <http://www.russiatoday.ru/news/news/21937>

²³¹ “Abkhazia speaker links Georgia NATO bid to recognition,” *RIA Novosti*, March 24 2008, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20080324/102078799-print.html>

²³² “Стенографический отчет о встрече с участниками международного клуба «Валдай»,” September 12, 2008. <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/09/206408.shtml>

²³³ Molly Corso, “Georgia: Moving on toward NATO, without a MAP,” *Eurasianet.org* December 3, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav120308.shtml>

Chapter Three

The Russian-Georgian War and its Consequences

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how national identity affects foreign policy behavior. This chapter will build on this, by examining the August 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict, although I posit that this conflict actually started much earlier than August, and will elaborate upon this within this chapter. My premise is that while Georgia started the military operation in South Ossetia, it fell into a Russian trap. Russia and Georgia's goals, achievements and losses will be assessed within this understanding.

Theoretically, the best way to understand this conflict is through the concept of a security dilemma. This will build upon Alexander Wendt's assumption that states treat friendly states and enemy states differently. Perception is an important element that is tempered by identity constructs, which is a key factor in foreign policy behavior. Russia and Georgia were already suspicious of each other's intentions prior to the outbreak of war. The period after the Bucharest Summit was one of intense provocation, particularly at the hands of the Russians. In this situation, Russia took an offensive position, which is advantageous compared to a defensive position, and Georgia, feeling threatened by an aggressive neighbor, turned to aggressive action in August 2008. The reason Georgia made this decision is ultimately encapsulated by the action-reaction dynamic. The Georgian government began assuming worst-case scenario thinking, and felt it necessary to take strong counter-measures against Russia, a hostile neighbor. This ultimately led to

Georgia undertaking a pre-emptive strike, because Russia's actions prior to this were very provocative and were interpreted as the beginnings of an attack against Georgia.

Ultimately, this was an inter-state conflict between Russia and Georgia, despite the fact that it started as a Georgian military operation in the Georgian separatist territory of South Ossetia, which is, according to international law, within the border of Georgia. Russia effectively made it an inter-state conflict, as both South Ossetia and Abkhazia had been de-facto annexed by Russia prior to the war; the most obvious example of many is found in Russia granting Russian citizenship to residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a grossly inappropriate action given Russia's supposed neutrality as a peacekeeping force in the region.²³⁴

Because the majority of those living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia held Russian passports, and were thus citizens of Russia, it legitimized Russia's intervention when Georgia staged the military operation in South Ossetia (although Russia had every right to protect its peacekeepers in the region). Protecting citizens abroad is an internationally recognized action, however, Russia is operating in a gray-zone. There is a difference between protecting Russian citizens abroad and protecting Russian citizens who are trying to create an independent entity on the territory of another state, as South Ossetia and Abkhazia are trying to do in Georgia. Russia granting citizenship to these separatist enclaves was envisioned as a means to exacerbate these conflicts, and create the necessary preconditions for Russian military intervention.²³⁵

²³⁴ For the position of the Georgian government, please see "Statement of the Ad Hoc Commission on Restoration of Territorial Integrity at the Parliament of Georgia," September 18, 2008, http://www.parliament.ge/print.php?gg=1&sec_id=628&info_id=20328&lang_id=ENG

²³⁵ Andreas Umland, "A Shield of a Passport: Moscow uses Russian Citizenship as a Tool for Recollecting the Empire's Lands," *Russia Profile.org*, August 21, 2008, http://www.atlantic-community.org/index/Open_Think_Tank_Article/Russian_Citizenship:_Moscow's_Tool_for_Recollecting_the_Empire's_Lands

Because this conflict is both inter-state and intra-state (being as Abkhazia and South Ossetia were legally within Georgia at the start of the war), the societal security dilemma is also a very useful tool to explain why Georgia launched a pre-emptive strike. Societal security is very much based around a group's dominant identity constructions, which have foreign policy implications. The concept of societal security is most often related to protecting political autonomy and territorial integrity. In Georgia, we see clear manifestations of this.

The Security Dilemma

Alexander Wendt wrote: "States act differently towards enemies than they do towards friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not."²³⁶ This somewhat obvious observation is very important when it comes to understanding state behavior. As I discussed in the earlier chapter, identity plays an important role in foreign policy discourse and behavior. Identity affects how a state will act. Further, state behavior is dependent upon its relationship with other states, as identities are constructed in relation to others.

When states are suspicious of one another, a security dilemma can ensue. An important element of this is found in the dichotomy between offense and defense. Both Robert Jervis and Stephen van Evera provide important analysis of offense versus defense within the parameters of the security dilemma. Jervis writes that the offensive position is advantageous when it is easier to destroy the enemy's army and take territory

²³⁶ Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it," 396-397.

than to defend one's own.²³⁷ Building on this, van Evera posits that states will often become aggressive if their neighbors are aggressive. Furthermore, when the offense is in a dominant position, "states are cursed with neighbors made aggressive by both temptation and fear. These neighbors see easy gains from aggression and danger in standing pat."²³⁸ These theoretical observations are very important in understanding the hostilities that took place in August 2008 between Russia and Georgia. Because Russia provoked Georgia, it was in an offensive position; furthermore, it was very easy for Russia to destroy the Georgian army and take the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia now, and prove that Russia calls the shots in the Caucasus, than to wait for the December NATO decision. If Georgia was given MAP status, this military operation would be that much more difficult, because it would no longer be between Russia and Georgia, but would now involve other NATO countries, due to Article 5.

The action-reaction dynamic is another important element in understanding the August 2008 war. This is seen when actors assume the worst-case scenarios, and begin to take countermeasures to deter or defend against a seemingly hostile neighbor.²³⁹ Before hostilities broke out this summer, Russia's actions were very provocative; for instance, strengthening ties with the separatist regions, shooting down an unmanned Georgian drone, and illegally increasing the number of Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia, among many others. The Georgian government believed that Russia was planning something and assumed the worst—that Russia would officially recognize the breakaway regions.

²³⁷ Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," 187.

²³⁸ van Evera, "Offense, Defense and the Causes of War," 8-9.

²³⁹ Roe, *Ethnic Violence*, 14.

This type of worst-case scenario thinking can ultimately lead to pre-emptive strikes, as states attempt to break out of the action-reaction cycle. The thought process is along the lines of: I believe you are going to attack me, so I will attack you first. Ultimately, this behavior can result in unintended consequences, as states seeking to secure their interests can significantly threaten their neighbors and drastically reduce security.²⁴⁰ This is precisely what happened between Russia and Georgia that led to open war in August 2008. Georgia attempted to act pre-emptively, and ended up instigating exactly what the Saakashvili government feared Russia would do: recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This war also effectively destroyed Georgia's chances of joining NATO as a full member, at least for now, because it showed that Russia's threat were not empty, and it also highlighted the instability of the region, and the risks NATO would take on with Georgia as a member.

Paul Roe's concept of a societal security dilemma is also a useful tool in explaining the war between Russia and Georgia. Societal identities are constructed, as was discussed in Chapter One, but they become at least temporarily fixed after construction. Group members behave around this certain dominant identity construction, and become important markers for security and foreign policy purposes. Societal security involves protecting this particular identity, whether it is ethno-national or religious. An obvious threat to societal security is feeling that this "we" identity is being challenged; whether this is actually the case or not is a different matter altogether. This type of threat includes issues of political autonomy and territorial integrity, with an emphasis on identity driven insecurities. Furthermore, it forces the group to refocus their energies on what they desire to secure, as well as how to achieve this. An important

²⁴⁰ Roe, *Ethnic Violence*, 15.

means to do this involves cultural nationalism, which was described in Chapter One. Essentially, it allows groups to look into their past to reconfigure their future, the idea being that the group must rekindle that which made them strong.²⁴¹

For Georgia, the successful reintegration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is an important measure of territorial integrity and strength, because Georgia was always historically strongest when it was united. When it was fragmented into various principalities and kingdoms was when the country fell victim to the machinations of various empires, finally culminating in asking for assistance from Russia, which then resulted in annexation. However, residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia want to be independent from Georgia, for reasons that largely stem from the Soviet ethno-federal system, the Soviet collapse, and extreme Georgian nationalism in the 1990s. As Roe writes: “While seeking to make its situation better by suppressing those groups that challenge its legitimacy, the state comes to make things worse by taking measures that serve only to heighten opposition to the regime.”²⁴²

March to War

The war between Russia and Georgia did not begin with the misconceived Georgian attempt to retake South Ossetia in August. Both sides were baiting each other over the course of several months, and Georgia ultimately reacted in a way that would allow the Russian government a means to legitimize its actions in the region. In this section, I will explore this idea by analyzing key events that occurred between April and

²⁴¹ Roe, *Ethnic Violence*, 46-51; 56; 60; 66.

²⁴² Roe, *Ethnic Violence*, 66.

August, before Russia effectively invaded sovereign Georgian territory in August, taking the conflict beyond the separatist enclaves. My premise is that a low-scale state of conflict was reality from the month of April; things merely heated up in August when the Georgian government made a fatal error in judgment.

Both Saakashvili and Medvedev framed the war and its aftermath in a way that was in line with their conceptions of national identity. I will explain how using several speeches and interviews given by each leader that present their understanding of the events that transpired. In this section, I will also go over the reasons that I believe that the Georgian government ultimately fell into a Russian trap and made fatal errors and assumptions, which caused exactly what they were trying to avoid. As such, I will explicate how Russia achieved several key foreign policy goals, very much dictated by its national identity, by provoking Georgia to act first.

The war between Georgia and Russia was carefully planned by the Russian administration, which provoked Georgia into action, and while both sides are responsible for the fighting that occurred, the cards were in Russia's hand.²⁴³ A major trigger for this war is that Russia has not been able to come to terms with the loss of its empire, and never truly accepted the former Soviet Republics as sovereign states. For instance, in an interview with CNN's Matthew Chance, PM Putin offered a history lesson, which was not entirely factually correct but which sent a clear message about the integration of

²⁴³ Андрей Илларионов, "Вторая грузинская война. Предварительные итоги." August 13, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5984&Itemid=69; "A Scripted War," *The Economist* 388, no. 8593 (August 16, 2008), <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/bsi/detail?vid=5&hid=5&sid=58994546-987a-4ae0-b1cf-3f6d3919dfff%40SRCSM1&bdata=JmxvZ2lucGFuZT1Mb2dpbi5hc3Amc2l0ZT1ic2ktbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#d=b&th&AN=33891736>; "Countdown in the Caucasus: Seven days that brought Russia and Georgia to war," *Financial Times*, August 26, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6699&Itemid=69

Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia into the Russian Empire, and the current state of the conflict between the three groups.

This is all part of a Russian campaign to de-legitimize Georgia by denigrating its history and besmirching its leadership, which helps bolster Russia's position in the region. For instance, Putin stresses that Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia all voluntarily integrated into the Russian Empire, which is not the case. The Georgian kingdom never agreed to annexation by Imperial Russia, only to a protectorate status. Abkhazia remained an independent principality until 1810, (although Putin states 1812), but its autonomy was not revoked until 1864, which Putin neglects to mention. He also edits out the Abkhaz revolt that occurred in 1864 against this, and also does not mention that Russia then exiled tens of thousands of Abkhaz as a punishment. He also states that South Ossetia was not incorporated into Georgia until the 19th century, when South Ossetia became part of the Russian Empire. Really, South Ossetia became part of Russia when Georgia was annexed in 1801.²⁴⁴

Putin's slight revisions of history are very important, because they very strongly suggest that South Ossetia and Abkhazia only became part of Georgia because of Imperial Russia's decisions, which then grants legitimacy to Russia's behavior. Another way Russia bolsters its position in the region is through denigrating the Georgian leadership. Examples of this can be found in Medvedev's meeting with the Valdai Club, a group of Western scholars who are Russia experts, where he refers to the Georgian

²⁴⁴ Putin's words taken from Vladimir Putin, interview by Matthew Chance, CNN, August 29, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/08/29/putin.transcript/index.html>; historical analysis from Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* 32-33. Kauffman, *Modern Hatreds*, 87-88, 90, 95; Edward Ozhiganov, "The Republic of Georgia: Conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia," in *Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union: Russian and American Perspectives*, eds: Alexei Arbatov, Abram Chayes, Antonia Handler Chayes and Lara Olson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 349.

government officials as idiots (*pridurki*). In the same meeting, he refers to Saakashvili as having pathological problems, being mentally unbalanced and having a drug problem.²⁴⁵ All of this taken together is designed to belittle Georgia and to show that it needs Russia's help, that Russia is fulfilling the task of a big brother. It is interesting to note that Russian media uses this language: Medvedev states that Russia has always treated Georgia with great respect, and that the Georgian people are like a brother nation to Russia.²⁴⁶

For Russia, the former Soviet republics, which were all associated with Imperial Russia, are "targets for systematic Russian abuse and intimidation that aims to undo the settlement of 1989-91."²⁴⁷ Here I would like mention again that Putin himself decried the collapse of the Soviet Union as the greatest geopolitical disaster of the century, and it is clear that nostalgia for the Soviet Union is an important element in Russia's national ideology and foreign policy orientation. While there are other more practical reasons for this war, discussed below, it was very much about "Russia, resurgent and nationalistic, pushing its way back into the Caucasus and chasing others out, and reversing the losses Russia feels it has suffered since the end of the cold war."²⁴⁸

The Soviet collapse meant that Russia no longer dictated the events of, and dominated over, former Soviet territories. However, Georgia was subject to Russian military ministrations and pressure, to an extent not seen in other post-Soviet countries, long before the outbreak of this war. In fact, it is the only country in which Russia has

²⁴⁵ "Стенографический отчет о встрече с участниками международного клуба «Валдай»," September 12, 2008.

²⁴⁶ "Власти России: Грузия устроила в Южной Осетии геноцид," *RIA Novosti*, August 8, 2008, <http://www.rian.ru/politics/20080810/150235861.html>

²⁴⁷ Blank, "Commentary: Russia Versus NATO in the CIS," May 14, 2008.

²⁴⁸ "A Scripted War," *The Economist*, August 16.

consistently used small-scale military force to achieve their desired aims. This includes bombing the Pankisi Gorge, for instance.²⁴⁹ However, a major stumbling block in Russia's control over Georgia territories came in the form of the Rose Revolution. This course of action suggested that Georgia was very determined to end the era of semi-authoritarian regimes and become a Western democracy. It also suggested that Georgia was very serious in its endeavor to be part of western geopolitical institutions, namely NATO. Although Russia had been issuing passports in Abkhazia and South Ossetia long before the Rose Revolution, following the Rose Revolution, Russia attempted to ratchet up the pressure facing Georgia, and began making bolder moves. This includes directly appointing Russian officials to the South Ossetian and Abkhaz de-facto governments. For instance, by the late 2000s, the prime minister, defense minister, and security chief of South Ossetia all belonged to either the military or security services.²⁵⁰

Another major trigger for Russia's action was Georgia's potential for future NATO membership. Although NATO did not offer Georgia MAP status at the Bucharest Summit, the organization did promise that Georgia would eventually be granted membership, and this emboldened Russia to act. After the Bucharest Summit, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko stated that Georgia in NATO would result in "the gravest consequences for overall European security."²⁵¹ For Russia, the loss of the southern Caucasus region would spell disaster for Russian control over the North Caucasus republics that are within the border of the Russian Federation. Historically, this

²⁴⁹ The bombing of the Pankisi Gorge revolved around the second war in Chechnya. For more details, please see: Jaba Devdariani, "Georgia Reacts to Russian Pressure," *Perspective* 13, no. 1 (September-October 2002): <http://www.bu.edu/iscip/vol13/devdariani.html>

²⁵⁰ Svante Cornell, "Another Look at the August War," *Center for Eurasian Policy, Hudson Institute*, December 9, 2008, <http://www.hudson.org/files/documents/Svante%20Cornell%20speech.pdf>

²⁵¹ Spiegel Staff, "Road to War in Georgia: the Chronicle of a Caucasian tragedy," *Der Spiegel*, August 25, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,druck-574812,00.html>

was always the case; in order for Russia to maintain control over the tribes in the North Caucasus, first it had to control the Transcaucasus.²⁵²

Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister stated that if Georgia was given MAP status in NATO, there would be no chances of solving the separatist conflicts through diplomatic channels. In Georgia, some analysts, such as Jumber Kirvalidze, began voicing their opinion of neutrality: that Abkhazia and South Ossetia would never be reintegrated by joining NATO; therefore, Georgia should declare that it will not join any military alliance, in return for Russian guarantees that the territory will be returned.²⁵³ Ultimately, these voices were drowned out by Georgia's decision to militarily re-take South Ossetia.

According to Stephen Blank, Professor of strategic studies at the U.S. Army College:

This is a war that Russian wanted, and clearly had planned for...the Russian army was sitting there waiting for this, that was essentially a provocation launched by the South Ossetians, who ratcheted up the level of violence in order to bring the Georgians—who are easily provokable, obviously—to attack...And the Russians were waiting there, ready with an operational plan and with forces in place—land, sea and air—to do what they have subsequently done.²⁵⁴

He also suggests that Russia's determination to launch a military offensive was evident even before April 2008. He cites Russia's withdrawal from the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) in July 2007 as a major indication of Russia's intentions. The CFE treaty limits the number of troops and military equipment between the Atlantic and Ural

²⁵² Igor Torbakov, "Post-Soviet Eurasia enters a new era," *Eurasianet.org*, September 17, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav091708.shtml>

²⁵³ Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Georgia: OSCE Envoy pushes for movement in South Ossetia peace process," *Eurasianet.org*, June 18, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav071808.shtml>

²⁵⁴ Brian Whitmore, "Did Russia plan its war in Georgia?" *Eurasianet.org partner post from RFL/RE*, August 16, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp081608.shtml>

Mountains. By removing themselves from the treaty, Russia effectively can deploy troops and equipment into the North Caucasus, and freely threaten Georgia, without repercussion.²⁵⁵ As Blank stated: “What Russia really wants is essentially to be able to do as it pleases in world affairs and to answer to nobody...It wants a total free hand, particularly in and around the CIS. It also needs to conjure up the idea of an enemy to justify its regime. The fact of the matter is that the most immediate threat here is to Georgia, because the Russian government could pack forces into the North Caucasus to threaten Georgia.”²⁵⁶

The Russian move to establish official cooperation between its government and Abkhazia and South Ossetia was a pivotal move in this unfolding drama. While it was not officially recognizing their independence—this would come later—what the Russian government did amounted to de-facto annexation of the territories. The decree issued by the Putin government would allow for “a free exchange of goods and services as well as recognizing property ownership, providing legal advice and offering consular services ‘when necessary.’”²⁵⁷

Following this, the Russian military downed a Georgian reconnaissance drone over Abkhazia, which a UN report later confirmed.²⁵⁸ It is interesting that while the Russian government denied involvement in the attack, the Abkhaz leaders took responsibility, claiming that an Abkhaz Soviet era L-39 jet shot down the drone. The

²⁵⁵ Stephen Blank, “Russia, Georgia and South Ossetia: Notes on a War,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 10, no. 16 (August 20, 2008), <http://www.cacianalyst.org/files/080820Analyst.pdf>

²⁵⁶ Whitmore, “Did Russia plan its war in Georgia?” August 16, 2008.

²⁵⁷ Corso, “Georgia holds steady as Moscow inches closer to Abkhazia and South Ossetia,” April 17, 2008.

²⁵⁸ UNOMIG, “Report of UNOMIG on the Incident of 20 April,” May 26, 2008.

radar footage clearly indicated that it was a Russian MiG-29 jet.²⁵⁹ Despite this, Russian officials continued to insist that they were not responsible, and furthermore, blamed Georgia for instigating the attack. Putin stated that the reconnaissance flight over Abkhazia was designed to escalate tension.²⁶⁰

Just a few short weeks after the drone drama, Russia unilaterally and illegally increased the amount of peacekeepers in Abkhazia, citing Georgia flying the drone over Abkhazia as the necessary impetus for this action. For the Georgian government, this was more proof that Russia could not act as fair mediator in the conflict. For the separatist, pro-Russian government in Abkhazia, this move quelled fears of a Georgian attack. During all of this, the Russian government continued to insist on Russia's obligation to intervene and protect its citizens in Abkhazia.²⁶¹

After the UN declared Russia responsible for the drone shoot-down at the end of May, the Georgian government increased the inflammatory rhetoric, which, given the already tense situation, did not help matters. Saakashvili announced that Georgia would do everything in its power to ensure the Russian peacekeeping presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia would come to a very quick end, but he did not provide any specific examples of how he would accomplish this. In Georgia, the belief prevailed that Russia was preparing Abkhazia for war.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Akhmeteli, "Georgia claims "clear proof" of Russian violation of air space," April 22, 2008; that the plane was Russian was further corroborated by the UNOMIG Report on the incident, which was released after this article was printed.

²⁶⁰ Sergei Blagov, "Russia hits back at Georgia in drone shoot-down flat," *Eurasianet.org*, April 23, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav042308f.shtml>

²⁶¹ Corso, "Georgia: Russian peacekeeper buildup in Abkhazia "illegitimate"—official," May 1, 2008.

²⁶² Nina Akhmeteli, "Georgia will use "all available means" to oust Russian peacekeepers from Abkhazia—President," *Eurasianet.org*, May 28, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav052808.shtml>

This belief was further given weight when Russian Railway Forces were deployed in Abkhazia in late May 2008. While the government claimed that they were there to protect and reconstruct the existing railway infrastructure for humanitarian purposes, the Georgian government assessed things very differently:

Nobody needs to bring Railway Forces to the territory of another country, if a military intervention is not being prepared. It is impossible to assess it otherwise...They are strengthening the military infrastructure in order to launch intervention into Georgia...If we recall the fact that the Russian Federation has already brought 500 paratroopers into Abkhazia and if we take into consideration that anti-aircraft missile systems and howitzers with a range of 50 kilometer, have been brought into our territory [into Abkhazia] illegally, it is quite clear, why it [sending of the Railway forces] is being done.²⁶³

In response to this, the Russian ambassador to Georgia, Vyacheslav Kovalenko stated: "Frankly speaking, I do not understand why so many concerns are being expressed over this matter...Repair of railway bridges and roads is a humanitarian act aimed at improving the lives of people in the region."²⁶⁴

In an attempt to mitigate the escalations between Russia and Georgia, Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Javier Solana, two top EU officials attempted to become involved in mediation, particularly in relation to the prickly issue of Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia. Although the European Parliament acknowledged that the UN mandate required renegotiation as Russia was no longer neutral in its peacekeeping mandate, it was clear that Russia was opposed to this.²⁶⁵ A subsequent meeting on June 6 between Saakashvili and Medvedev revealed that they were unable to find a means to reduce the tension between Russia and Georgia; Medvedev insisted that that the matter of Abkhazia

²⁶³ "Tbilisi Condemns Russian 'Railway Troops' in Abkhazia," *Civil Georgia*, May 31, 2008, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18445&search>

²⁶⁴ "Russian Envoy: Repair of Abkhaz Railway a "Humanitarian Act,"" *Civil Georgia*, June 2, 2008, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18453&search>

²⁶⁵ Atho Lobjaks, "EU: Brussels Steps in to Soothe Georgia-Russia Tensions," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 5, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1144559.html>

could be solved without foreign mediation, while Saakashvili continued to insist on the internationalization of the peacekeeping force on the ground.²⁶⁶

In July, the situation continued to degenerate. For one, there was an assassination attempt on Dimitri Sanakoev, who was head of the pro-Georgian South Ossetian provisional government. The Georgian government blamed Russia, while the separatists in South Ossetia accused the Georgian secret service of orchestrating the plot.²⁶⁷ Following this, the Russian government openly admitted to violating Georgian airspace, stating that the plane was sent to prevent Georgian forces from entering South Ossetia to free four Georgian servicemen who had been arrested by the separatist government, although an earlier statement on July 8 by the Georgian Defense Ministry indicated that they had been released. However, the Georgian side admits that they were prepared to carry out operations to free these soldiers, if the South Ossetian separatists refused to do so.²⁶⁸

In this regard, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement regarding the airspace violation: that it was designed to cool off the hot heads in Tbilisi, and to prevent a military situation from unfolding, which seemed like an imminent reality.²⁶⁹ In an interesting analysis of the situation, Michael Emerson of the Centre for

²⁶⁶ Nina Akhmeteli, "Georgia: Saakashvili and Medvedev Meet, Nothing Happens," *Eurasianet.org*, June 6, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav060608a.shtml>; "Russia: Moscow Warns Georgia, Ukraine; Brushes Off Abkhaz Mediation Offer," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 7, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1144576.html>

²⁶⁷ "Three Injured in Attack on Georgian Convoy in S. Ossetia," *Civil Georgia*, July 3, 2008, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18674&search=Three%20Injured%20in%20Attack%20on%20Georgian%20Convoy%20in%20S.%20Ossetia.%94>

²⁶⁸ Molly Corso, "Georgia: President describes Russia as the "elephant in the room" in peace process," *Eurasianet.org*, July 10, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav071008f.shtml>; "Russia Confirms its Aircraft Intrude into Georgia," *Civil Georgia*, July 10, 2008, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18748&search=%93Russia%20Confirms%20its%20Aircraft%20Introduce%20into%20Georgia.%94>

²⁶⁹ Министерство Иностранных Дел Российской Федерации: Департамент Информации И Печати "Комментарий Департамента информации и печати МИД России в связи с ситуацией в Южной

European Policy Studies in Brussels stated that neither America nor Russia were impartial negotiators: “Both are interested parties,” he stated.²⁷⁰ This airspace incursion resulted in Georgia recalling its ambassador to Russia.

Provocations on both sides continued, as both Russia and Georgia began intense military exercises on either side of the Caucasus in July. The Russian contingent of “Kavkaz 2008” consisted of 8000 soldiers, whose training would prepare them to take over for the current peacekeepers in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On the Georgian side of the Caucasus mountains, for “Immediate Response 2008” 600 Georgian troops were joined by 100 troops from Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia, and 1000 American troops. Despite the fact the Georgian increased the number of its military personnel to 37 000, an increase of more than 15%, Russia’s military was still clearly superior at 1.13 million soldiers. The Georgian government attributed this increase to “specific, not theoretical threats” related to “recent events in Abkhazia and South Ossetia...especially the air-defense situation.”²⁷¹

Despite the apparent standstill between the two sides, the OSCE remained committed to trying to find a solution to the conflicts and bring down the level of tension between Russia and Georgia. In light of recent events in the area, in continuing to insist that the peacekeeping mandate must be changed, the Georgian government decided not to attend a planned session of the Joint Control Commission (JCC), which was in charge of the implementation of 1992 Georgian-South Ossetian ceasefire, as well as implementing

Осетии,” July 10, 2008, http://www.in.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/sps/CCF2BD3D05F81BB1C325748200449D3D

²⁷⁰ Corso, “Georgia: President describes Russia as the “elephant in the room” in peace process,” July 10, 2008.

²⁷¹ Helena Bedwell and Alex Nicholson, “Russia, Georgia Begin War Games as Tensions Escalate in Regions,” *Bloomberg*, July 15, 2008,

http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4298&Itemid=67

confidence building measures and managing economic rehabilitation projects in South Ossetia. While the OSCE has an observer seat on this commission, the major players are Russia, Georgia, South Ossetia and North Ossetia. Given this, it is not surprising that the Georgian government deemed the JCC as “Russian dominated and inefficient,”²⁷² while seeking to change this mandate to include more parties, such as the EU, and the pro-Georgian Provisional Administration of South Ossetia.

“Russian Imperialist Boots are again stomping our Country,”²⁷³ versus “A Proportionate Response to an Unprovoked Assault”²⁷⁴

The week in the immediate lead-up to war was rife with violence. Both the Georgian and South Ossetian sides claimed civilian deaths and injuries. The Georgian side very quickly blamed Russia for the problems in South Ossetia, while Tskinvali accused Georgia of trying to make a grab for the region. Because of the violence on both sides, the South Ossetian government began evacuating civilians as early as August 2, which, according to Andrei Illarionov, sent a red flag to the Georgian government, because never before during times of violence and tension between South Ossetia and Georgia had such evacuations taken place.²⁷⁵ Furthermore, the South Ossetian side assured Georgia that they would seek military assistance from Abkhazia as well as the

²⁷²Peuch, “Georgia: OSCE Envoy pushes for movement in South Ossetia peace process,” June 18, 2008.

²⁷³Saakashvili stated this during an August 11 televised address to the Georgian nation

²⁷⁴This was stated by Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

²⁷⁵ Андрей Илларионов, Ведущие Сергей Бунтман и Мария Гайдар, *Разворот*, Эхо Москвы, October 24, 2008, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/razvorot/archive/63.html>

North Caucasian republics in Russia, should more clashes occur, and also, that they would attack Georgian cities.²⁷⁶

At this time, early reports also indicated that there was a buildup of Russian troops on the border with South Ossetia as early as August 2nd and 3rd indicating that Russia was prepared for military action.²⁷⁷ Russia's promise to intervene was confirmed on August 5 by senior Russian diplomat Yuri Popov, who stated that Russian would defend its citizens in the separatist territories. Also, there were signs that Russian Airborne Troops were ready to enter South Ossetia and help the Russian peacekeepers stationed there; furthermore, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that military conflict was very imminent. This was August 3rd. That same day, the South Ossetian government refused to meet with Georgia's Minister for Territorial Integration to discuss the current situation in South Ossetia.²⁷⁸

The Georgian government was very adamant about blaming Russia for the outbreak of hostilities, but also acknowledged that Russia had a constructive role to play in helping to diffuse the current tensions. Despite Georgia declaring a unilateral ceasefire to keep the situation from spiraling out of control, and despite Georgia's desire to resume talks with South Ossetia, the violence on both sides continued. A statement issued by the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on August 7 stated:

²⁷⁶ Giorgi Lomsadze, "Georgia: tensions flare over breakaway South Ossetia," *Eurasianet.org*, August 4, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav080408.shtml>

²⁷⁷ Андрей Илларионов, Ведущие Сергей Бунтман и Мария Гайдар, *Разворот*, Эхо Москвы, October 24, 2008, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/razvorot/archive/63.html>

²⁷⁸ "Relative Quiet but Tensions Remain high in S. Ossetia," *Civil Georgia*, August 3, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5033&Item=65; Lomsadze, "Georgia: tensions flare over breakaway South Ossetia," August 4, 2008; "Russia vows to defend S. Ossetia" *BBC News*, August 5, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5114&Itemid=65; Dmitry Solovyov, "Russian warns Georgia over breakaway region," *Reuters*, August 5, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5124&Itemid=65

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia emphasizes that all responsibility for the recent development of events falls on the Russian Federation: it is from the Russian territory, through the Roki tunnel that the mercenaries, military hardware and armament used to raid peaceful villages in the Tskhinvali region keep penetrating Georgia; it is Russian-delegated “siloviki” that continue to staff the criminal separatist regime; it is due to the Russian Federation’s unconstructive position that the local population has incurred damages in the last few days, and the situation keeps deteriorating day by day.

These developments must lead the Russian Federation to the conclusion that the only way to achieve de-escalation of the situation is through urgently establishing joint monitoring over the Roki tunnel, increasing the number of OSCE military monitoring officers in the Tskhinvali region, immediately modifying the existing format of negotiations, launching a direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict...The recent developments have shown clearly that the position of the Russian Federation will be the decisive factor in how the process will unfold in the Tskhinvali region.²⁷⁹

On August 8, the Georgian government claimed to be in control of Tskhinvali, as well as all other villages in South Ossetia. When the intense fighting began, the Russian military was immediately sent to South Ossetia. Despite the seemingly advantageous position Georgia was in on August 8, Saakashvili’s rhetoric indicated that Georgia was on the defensive, and that there would be further challenges in the coming days.²⁸⁰ Georgia was indeed in the defensive position, as Russia provoked them into attacking South Ossetia. Russia was controlling how events unfolded.

That same day, President Medvedev issued a statement, claiming that Russia’s presence on Georgian territory was entirely legal by international law. He was referring to the peacekeeping mandate and the agreements surrounding it, and in this regard, he was technically correct. He then states that Georgia committed a horrible act of aggression against civilians—Russian citizens—and Russian peacekeepers, which

²⁷⁹ Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the Situation in the Tskhinvali region,” August 7, 2008,

http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5204&Itemid=65

²⁸⁰ “Georgia: President says Georgian troops control South Ossetia,” *Eurasianet.org*, August 8, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav080808a.shtml>

violates international law and Russia's legal position as a peacekeeper in the region. He declares that it is these circumstances that dictate Russia's next steps, and that the perpetrators of this crime will receive the punishment they deserve.²⁸¹

Russian officials, such as Dmitri Rogozin claimed that Saakashvili was directly responsible for the deaths of thousands of people and charged Georgia with ethnic cleansing in South Ossetia.²⁸² Blaming Georgia for starting the aggression by shooting civilians and peacekeepers, the Russian government continued to stress that their actions in response to the situation in South Ossetia were within the bounds of international law. The Russian government promised to help the people in South Ossetia recover from this humanitarian disaster; for instance, they promised that they would play an active role in returning order to the city of Tskinali.²⁸³ Putin also emphasized that Russia played an important, positive, stabilizing role in the Caucasus for centuries, which helped to ensure security and progress. This is the role Russia currently plays, and will continue to play in the future. "This is how it was in the past, and how it will be in the future...No one should ever doubt that."²⁸⁴

As such, when the situation turned, and Georgia announced that it was withdrawing from South Ossetia on August 10, in an attempt to negotiate a cease-fire with Russia, Russia continued its aerial and ground assault on Georgia, and this is where Russia's actions could no longer be justified by international law. On August 9, 6000 Russian troops entered South Ossetia through the Roki Tunnel, which separates North

²⁸¹ Д.А. Медведев, "Заявление в связи с ситуацией в Южной Осетии," August 8, 2008, http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2008/08/26/1545_type63374type82634type205158_205744.shtml

²⁸² "Рогозин считает президента Грузии военным преступником," *RIA Novosti*, August 8, 2008, <http://www.rian.ru/politics/20080809/150218083.html>.

²⁸³ "Власти России: Грузия устроила в Южной Осетии геноцид," August 8, 2008.

²⁸⁴ "Россия играла и будет играть стабилизирующую роль на Кавказе – Путин," *RIA Novosti*, August 8, 2008, <http://www.rian.ru/politics/20080809/150231084.html>

Ossetia from South Ossetia, with 90 tanks, 150 armored personnel carriers and 250 artillery gunships. However, their attack was not limited to Georgian civilians and military officials in South Ossetia (reports indicated that Georgians were being forced out of mixed villages in South Ossetia, which were later verified as true). For instance, that night, Russia bombed the Tbilisi International Airport, which was well outside the borders of South Ossetia. The Russian military also bombed several towns, again outside of the separatist area, including villages in Samagrela, which borders on Abkhazia, as well as villages that bordered South Ossetia.²⁸⁵

On August 11, the situation grew worse, and Russia continued its offensive in Georgia, occupying important cities on the strategic East-West highway, including Senaki. They also honed in on Tbilisi, attacking Gori²⁸⁶, a city only 50 miles away from the capital, and their maneuvers from the West and North suggested that they were planning a pincer movement against Tbilisi, which was being bombed. Furthermore, other villages and regions fell victim to Russian bombs, including the port of Poti, and villages in Adjara, a region that borders that Black Sea. A Georgian patrol boat in the Black Sea was sunk. All of this prompted Saakashvili to announce, “Russian imperialist boots are again stomping our country.” It is also interesting to note that he also referenced the 1921 Russian occupation of Georgia as a parallel for the current events.²⁸⁷

On August 12, EU President Nicolas Sarkozy helped to broker a ceasefire between Russia and Georgia, although it became very clear that Russia had no intention

²⁸⁵ Elizabeth Owen and Giorgi Lomsadze, “Georgian troops withdraw from South Ossetia, Russia bombs Tbilisi Airport,” *Eurasianet.org*, August 10, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081008.shtml>

²⁸⁶ For a description of the road between Gori and Tskhinvali, and the brutal attacks of the Russian army in this area, please listen to: Андрей Илларионов, Ведущие Сергей Бунтман и Мария Гайдар, *Разворот*, Эхо Москвы, October 24, 2008, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/razvorot/archive/63.html>

²⁸⁷ “Russian “Imperialist Boots” stomping on Georgia-President,” *Eurasianet.org*, August 11, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081108.shtml>

of following through with it. There were three guiding principles for Sarkozy: (1) Tbilisi acted inappropriately; (2) Russia reacted disproportionately; (3) Russia's aim was to overthrow Saakashvili. He states: "We saw the war as a completely disproportionate reaction from the Russians in the case of the conflict with Georgia...And I use this word—disproportionate—because it was disproportionate to intervene as the Russian did in Georgia...And I also use the word 'reaction', because [Russia's] reaction was disproportionate but that was because there was a preceding inappropriate action..."²⁸⁸

Sarkozy also states that when he went to Russia to negotiate the ceasefire on August 12, Russian troops were only 40 kilometers from Tbilisi, with a clear aim to overthrow the Saakashvili government. The implication is that the EU played a key role in preventing this, and although he admits that the ceasefire is imperfect, it ultimately created the necessary conditions for Russian troops withdrawal.²⁸⁹

The most basic premise of the document called for both Russian and Georgian forces to return back to their original positions before the war began, although Russia interpreted it differently, believing that it allowed for Russia to maintain a buffer zone on the Georgian side of the South Ossetian border. Following the cease-fire being signed, the situation became increasingly worse, as reports surfaced from Human Rights Watch, as well as Georgian and Western diplomats, that Georgian villages on the vicinity of South Ossetia were falling victim to a Russian/South Ossetian scorched earth policy, to ensure a buffer between Georgia and South Ossetia. Russian troops were also involved in looting campaigns in the city of Gori, where Russian troops set up a checkpoint on August 13. Despite the fact that these military incursions happened after the ceasefire

²⁸⁸ "Sarkozy on Russo-Georgian War," *Civil Georgia*, October 23, 2008, <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=19799>

²⁸⁹ "Sarkozy on Russo-Georgian War," October 23, 2008.

was signed, Russian officials insisted that they did nothing wrong. David Miliband, the British Foreign Secretary provided a succinct summary of Russia's actions: "The sight of Russian tanks in Gori, Russian tanks in Senaki, the Russian blockade of Poti, the Georgian port, are a chilling reminder of times that I think we had hoped had gone by."²⁹⁰

Adding to this ominous outlook was a statement made by Lavrov on August 14: "forget about Georgia's territorial integrity."²⁹¹ The basic understanding of this statement, as interpreted locally in Georgia, was that Russia would ultimately recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and that it would likely be sooner rather than later. Rhetoric aside, the situation on the ground remained indicative of Russia's sinister intentions, as Russian troops remained on the ground in Georgia, and even began moving closer to Tbilisi, despite the cease fire having been signed two days prior. In fact, upon meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on August 15, President Medvedev outright stated that Russia would continue to intervene to protect both Russian peacekeepers and Russian citizens in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia.²⁹²

International law expert, Anne-Marie Slaughter stated in an interview with *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* that Russia's actions within South Ossetia could arguably be seen as within the parameters of international law for a very simple reason: Russia was acting to protect Russian peacekeepers, that is, Russian citizens, and was defending an internationally agreed upon peacekeeping force. However, as soon as Russia moved

²⁹⁰ Giorgi Lomsadze, "Georgia: no war, no peace," *Eurasianet.org*, August 13, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081308.shtml>

²⁹¹ Giorgi Lomsadze, "Georgia: Russia keeps West guessing about its intentions," *Eurasianet.org*, August 14, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081408a.shtml>

²⁹² Lomsadze, "Georgia: Russia keeps West guessing about its intentions," August 14, 2008; "Georgian President signs truce, but rhetoric continues," *Eurasianet.org partner post from RFE/RL*, August 15, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp081508.shtml>; "Peace plan signed, but Russian forces appear to advance," *Eurasianet.org*, August 15, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081508.shtml>

beyond South Ossetia and Abkhazia, this analysis could no longer be viewed as relevant. As soon as Russia began its attack within Georgia proper, it became plainly and simply aggression against another sovereign state, which is a direct violation of the UN charter. She also states that the buffer zone Russia created outside of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which impinged on Georgian territory, was grossly illegal, and particularly worrisome because it appeared that this move was a precursor to formally absorbing Abkhazia and South Ossetia. International law, in most cases, does not support breakaway groups declaring their own independent states, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not an exception to this rule.²⁹³ Given that Russia formally recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia on August 26, only 5 days after this interview was published, Slaughter's analysis of Russia's intentions was correct.

Aftermath

The withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia was a long and drawn out process, which left a swathe of infrastructure destruction in the process. Perhaps the best explanation for Russia's actions was stated by President Medvedev on August 18: "That which was done by the Georgian government...was impossible to leave unpunished."²⁹⁴ Furthermore, early on in the process, there were clear indications that these troops would not return to Russia, but would rather station themselves in and around South Ossetia.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ "Russia in violation of UN Charter, says International Law expert," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 21, 2008, http://www.rferl.org/content/Russia_In_Violation_Of_UN_Charter/1192835.html

²⁹⁴ "Действия Грузии нельзя было оставить безнаказанными – Медведев," *RIA Novosti*, August 18, 2008, http://www.rian.ru/osetia_news/20080818/150466569.html

²⁹⁵ "Medvedev Pledges Russian Withdrawal," *Eurasianet.org for RFE/RL*, August 17, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081708.shtml>; Elizabeth Owen and Giorgi Lomsadze, "Medvedev: a pause for peace?" *Eurasianet.org*, August 17, 2008,

There was also a policy in place for the Russification of border towns between South Ossetia and Georgia, for example the town of Akhalkgori, where Georgians and Ossetians have traditionally lived peacefully. Although the town is in South Ossetia, it was never administered by the South Ossetian government, and remained within the jurisdiction of the Georgian government. When the war began, the town was captured by South Ossetian separatists, who expelled Georgian forces. Russian troops also occupied the town. After Russian began its military withdrawal in late August, the Russian militia was simply replaced with heavily armed South Ossetian fighters, who then began attempting to force Russian passports on the citizens of this town. Akhalkgori is now suddenly being called by its Soviet-era name, Leningori.²⁹⁶

It is not surprising that Russia rejected a UN drafted resolution on August 20, stating that it went against the terms of the EU ceasefire. Russia's interpretation of the EU brokered ceasefire was such that Russia was allowed to maintain a buffer zone for troops to be stationed on the Georgian side of the South Ossetian border, while the UN resolution called for Russia to withdraw to positions held before the outbreak of conflict. The Russian Ambassador to the UN also stated that he disliked the language of the resolution, which called for respect for Georgian territorial integrity. His reason was that neither Abkhazia nor South Ossetia wanted to be part of Georgia.²⁹⁷

<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081708a.shtml>; Girogi Lomsadze and Elizabeth Owen, "Georgia: Russian troops disregarding presidential pullout pledge," *Eurasianet.org*, August 18, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav081808a.shtml>

²⁹⁶ Андрей Илларионов, Ведущие Сергей Бунтман и Мария Гайдар, *Разворот*, Эхо Москвы, October 24, 2008, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/razvorot/archive/63.html>; "Border villages being 'Russified,'" *Eurasianet.org partner post from RFL/RE*, August 30, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp083007.shtml>

²⁹⁷ "Russia rejects UN Georgia draft," *BBC*, August 20, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6279&Itemid=69

Figure 3: Russian Military Aggression in Georgia²⁹⁸

Towards the end of August, with Russia's official recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and with the EU-brokered ceasefire being haphazardly implemented, Fareed Zakaria interviewed Saakashvili and an unidentified member of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Zakaria asked the Russian MFA representative, who claimed that Russia had implemented the withdrawal and had retreated to positions held before hostilities broke out: "But Mr. Minister, you are in the port of Poti. How on earth could you make the claim that you need troops there to prevent an attack? That was not

²⁹⁸Georgian Ministry of Defense, "Russian Military Aggression in Georgia," http://www.agc.army.mil/Georgia/maps/Russian_Aggression.jpg

envisioned under the plan at all.” The Minister responded: “Nothing in the existing plan, which was agreed by Russia, precludes us from establishing posts that will ensure security of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.” Very poignantly, Zakaria then asks him if “there is any part of Georgia that you feel you could not be in by this logic?”²⁹⁹ This short snippet illustrates Russia’s neoimperialistic intentions towards Georgia. Poti is nowhere near South Ossetia, and while it shares the Black Sea Coast with Abkhazia, there was no justification for Russia to occupy the city. The occupation and destruction was meant to intimidate Georgia and highlight Russia’s strength, as well as economically damage the country; Poti is the location of a recent \$200 million port development project.

When Russian troops finally began withdrawing on August 22, serious questions began arising as to the role of Russian troops in the expulsion of ethnic Georgians from villages in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Georgian government strongly believed that Russia perpetrated ethnic cleansing, the very charge the Russian government hurled at Georgia in regards to the situation in South Ossetia. In order to find an answer, Georgia applied to have cases heard at the European Court of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice. The Georgian government accused the Russians of attempting to “secure both South Ossetia and Abkhazia as ethnically homogenous client states free from Georgian political, social or cultural influence, and to prevent the return of ethnic Georgians and others who would resist Russia’s de facto annexation of the territories.”³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ Mikheil Saakashvili, interview by Fareed Zakaria, *Fareed Zakaria GPS*, CNN, August 31, 2008, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/080831/fzgps.01.html>

³⁰⁰ Nina Akhmetali, “Georgia: Russian troops withdrawing, but ethnic cleansing accusations linger,” *Eurasianet.org*, August 22, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav082208a.shtml>

Shortly thereafter, on August 26 Russia officially recognized the separatist territories. In his public statement, Medvedev claimed that Georgia's aim was to annihilate the people of South Ossetia through genocide. Further, he stated that Tbilisi never desired a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and that the only way to save lives in Abkhazia and South Ossetia was through official recognition of their independence.³⁰¹ This continued to be the official party line. For instance, one month after the recognition, Sergei Lavrov echoed these exact sentiments, stating that recognition was the only means to ensure the very survival of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.³⁰²

The Georgian government, the EU, the USA and the OSCE all denounced Russia's unilateral move against Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Georgia's Justice Minister Nika Gvaramia challenged Russia's decision on the basis of separatism within Russia: "I would like to know what Russia is going to do against separatism inside its borders, as the separatism is still problematic there."³⁰³ Gregory Gleason also notes this inherent contradiction: "Dmitry Medvedev, Vladimir Putin and Sergei Lavrov have uniformly stressed that the Russian military operation in South Ossetia was to save lives and to give recognition to the principle of self-determination in a way that upheld international law."³⁰⁴ However, this begs the question, why can Russia recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but crush national self-determination movements in Chechnya and Daghestan, for instance.

³⁰¹ Д.А. Медведев "Заявление Президента Российской Федерации Дмитрия Медведева, August 26, 2008, http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2008/08/26/1545_type63374type82634type205158_205744.shtml

³⁰² "Лавров: признание Абхазии и ЮО - единственная мера для их выживания," *RIA Novosti*, September 27, 2009, <http://www.rian.ru/politics/20080927/151657570.html>

³⁰³ Molly Corso, "Georgia: Russia formally recognizes separatist regions, drawing US, EU criticism," *Eurasianet.org*, August 26, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav082608b.shtml>

³⁰⁴ Gregory Gleason, "The Russo-Georgian War and Great Power Politics," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 10, no. 18 (September 17, 2008): 7, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/files/080917Analyst.pdf>

The chairman of the OSCE, Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, spoke out quite harshly against Russia, stating that their action was in direct violation of OSCE principles: “The international community cannot accept unilaterally established buffer zones.” For those Georgians displaced from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the recognition of the territories was hardly a surprise. The head of the Abkhaz government-in-exile, Malkhaz Akishbaia, called Russia’s resolution “a piece of paper” that does not actually change anything, as it just officially recognizes what has already been happening over the course of many years. Not surprisingly, Akishbaia blamed Russia’s meddling in the conflict from preventing Abkhazia and Georgia to be able to constructively settle their differences.³⁰⁵ Shortly thereafter, on August 29, Georgia broke off all diplomatic ties with Russia, and Russia followed suit accordingly, although Russia declared on August 26 that it would no longer conduct business with the Saakashvili government: “We will no longer have any association with the Saakashvili regime. Let the Georgian people sort out his fate.”³⁰⁶ Since the Soviet collapse, this marked the first time that Russia completely cut diplomatic ties with one of the former republics, which then became independent states.³⁰⁷

The Medvedev-Sarkozy Plan was an important element in establishing peace, although the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was a serious point of contention. Based on the EU-brokered August ceasefire, the plan was successful in the sense that Russia would start withdrawing its troops within the month to their pre-war positions, and leave the artificially created buffer zone around the separatist regions, but

³⁰⁵ Corso, “Georgia: Russia formally recognizes separatist regions,” August 26, 2008.

³⁰⁶ “Россия не будет иметь никаких дел с режимом Саакашвили – Медведев,” *RIA Novosti*, August 26, 2008, <http://www.rian.ru/politics/20080826/150699661.html>

³⁰⁷ Andrew E. Kramer, “Georgia and Russia Sever Diplomatic Ties,” *International Herald Tribune*, August 29, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6954&Itemid=69

Georgia was required to guarantee that it would not undertake any aggressive acts towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This deal also clarified issues related to international observation mechanisms. It stated that UN observers would continue their work, as would OSCE observers (although this would change in December), and that the EU would provide at least 200 observers, and act as the guarantor of non-aggression., taking Russia's place.³⁰⁸

This deal was brokered despite the fact that Russia did not believe that international peacekeepers should remain in the regions, stating that they no longer had the moral authority to do so. As explained by Sergei Mironov, Speaker of the Federation Council in Russia, the UN Security Council did not denounce the genocide that occurred in South Ossetia, and particularly the European representatives, instead, rallied against the so-called Russian aggression in Georgia. Because of this, the UN peacekeeping force should not be there. Rather, the most important peacekeeping forces that should be on the ground in the Caucasus are the nations of the Caucasus, with the guarantee of Russia.³⁰⁹

With Russia insisting that it engaged appropriately, the verbal sparring continued at the International Court of Justice. Just a few days prior to the hearing, Putin stated that the Russian government felt no need to apologize to anyone because it was certain that their actions were the correct course of action, both morally and within the framework on

³⁰⁸ Д.А. Медведев, "Пресс-конференция по окончании встречи с Президентом Франции Николя Саркози," September 8, 2008, <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/09/206269.shtml>; Lili Di Pippo, "As Russians withdraw, Georgia banks on European observers," *Eurasianet.org*, October 9, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav100908.shtml>

³⁰⁹ "Миронов: у иностранных миротворцев нет права находиться в Южной Осетии," *RIA Novosti*, August 20, 2008, http://www.rian.ru/osetia_news/20080820/150522188.html

international law.³¹⁰ Furthermore where the Georgian government charged Russia with ethnic cleansing of Georgians from South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Although the Russian government stated that these claims were completely without merit, the Georgian side did have some evidence that suggested otherwise, including very recent Human Rights Watch reports about the intentional torching of ethnic Georgian villages.³¹¹ The Hague ultimately ruled, by a very close vote, that Russia was guilty of ethnically discriminating against Georgians in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Court also insisted that Russia must not deter the work on international aid workers trying to assist Georgians who were injured or displaced by Russia's actions, a direct response to reports that Russia was not allowing humanitarian assistance to be delivered to Georgians who were located behind Russian lines.³¹²

Despite the Medvedev-Sarokzy plan, given Russia's real position on the role of international observers, it is not shocking that problems with the OSCE Observer Mission began shortly after Sarkozy and Medvedev met. Despite the fact that their agreement called for the OSCE being able to carry out its mandate in their area of responsibility as it was on August 7, Russia insisted that OSCE and EU monitors should remain outside both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, thus making it impossible for the international observers to

³¹⁰ "Россия уверена в правоте своих действий в Южной Осетии – Путин," *RIA Novosti*, September 6, 2008, http://www.rian.ru/osetia_news/20080906/151034831.html

³¹¹ Luke Harding, "Crisis in Georgia: Russia agrees deadline to withdraw forces from Georgia," *The Guardian*, September 9, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/08/georgia.russia1>; Nina Akhmeteli, "Georgia: World Court provides second battleground for Tbilisi and Moscow," *Eurasianet.org*, September 11, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav091108c.shtml>; Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Georgia: international observer mission faces uncertain future," *Eurasianet.org*, September 19, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav091908.shtml>

³¹² "International Court of Justice Grants Georgia's Request to Order Russia to Stop Ethnic Cleansing," *US Newswire*, October 17, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7802&Itemid=69

move freely around the entire territory of Georgia.³¹³ The EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), deployed on October 1 fared better than the OSCE, although this deployment was also not without controversy. Like the OSCE, EUMM and Russia were at odds over the EUMM's desire to patrol inside South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as the EU did not agree with Russia's recognition of these regions. For Russia, having observers inside Abkhazia and South Ossetia had to be decided by their governments, as Russia regarded them as separate and independent entities.³¹⁴

A major blow to Georgia occurred on October 16, when Abkhazia reasserted control over the Kodori Gorge, the only area in Abkhazia that was within Georgian jurisdiction. The Kodori Gorge was symbolic of what Abkhazia could expect if it reunited with Georgia; the loss was difficult to swallow.³¹⁵ It was made all that more difficult with Russia's announcement only days later that it would build land, sea and air bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which would greatly strengthen Russia's position militarily in the South Caucasus and Black Sea region. This would allow them to preemptively respond to any overtures NATO could make towards Georgia, be it cooperation or membership. As such, this move greatly strengthens Russia's position in the South Caucasus, and vis-à-vis Georgia.³¹⁶ This move, in conjunction with the Russian army being stationed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the recognition of the two regions and the creation of buffer zones all served to stress one idea: that Russia was not

³¹³ Peuch, "Georgia: international observer mission faces uncertain future," September 19, 2008.

³¹⁴ Di Pippo, "As Russians withdraw, Georgia banks on European observers," October 9, 2008.

³¹⁵ Elizabeth Owen, "Georgia: Abkhazia reasserts control over Upper Kodori Gorge," *Eurasianet.org*, October 16, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101608.shtml>

³¹⁶ Paul Goble, "New Russian Bases in Abkhazia, S. Ossetia Strengthen Moscow's Hand in S. Caucasus, Black Sea Region," *Windows on Eurasia*, October 21, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7699&Itemid=68

going to seriously entertain any discussion about the internationalization of the peacekeeping force on the ground.³¹⁷

Furthermore, it also seems that the Russian government is keen on fanning other ethnic tensions within Georgia to further weaken the country. After Russia formally recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia, ethnic Armenians in the Javakheti region of Georgia increased their activism against the Georgian government with the ultimate belief that Russia can help them, similar to how they helped Abkhazia and South Ossetia.³¹⁸ Certainly, fueling tension within Georgia would give Russia even more influence in the region. Corroborating this view is Andrei Illarionov, who was once an advisor to Putin, but who has since left the Kremlin. He states that during the war, leaflets were distributed in Mingrelia and Svaneti with the intention of agitating ethnic tension. Russia also purposely roused issues in Javakheti and attempted to incite uprisings in Marneuli, a territory populated by ethnic Azeris. He argues that the ultimate Russian goal in this regard was to force Georgia to be broken up into several smaller states, which would then replicate the situation that Georgia was in during the 18th and 19th centuries, when it was forced to appeal for Russian protection.³¹⁹

Despite this, when representatives of Russia and Georgia met in November, their first real significant talks since the August war, mediators (The EU, UN, and OSCE) stated that there was some degree of productive discussion over how to ease tensions in the region. The results of this round of talks would be presented at the next session of the

³¹⁷ Bruno Coppieters, "The August Wars: from Political Confrontation to Military Escalation," *Caucas Europe News*, October 31, 2008, http://www.caucas.com/home_eng/breve_contenu.php?id=348

³¹⁸ For an in-depth report on Russian actions in the region, please see Andro Barnovi, "Detailed Review on Samtskhe-Javakheti," *Stand-Institute for Strategy and Development*, January 22, 2009, http://www.stand.ge/admin/uploaded_files/file_200902151504.pdf

³¹⁹ Andrei Illarionov, "Another Look at the August War," *Center for Eurasian Policy, Hudson Institute*, December 9, 2008, <http://www.hudson.org/files/documents/Andrei%20Illarionov%20speech.pdf>

Geneva talks, scheduled for December 17-18. The strength of this round of talks lay in its format: it was not a formal plenary session where participants acted as official delegates, but rather working groups where officials acted as representatives. Significantly, representatives from Abkhazia and South Ossetia were included in this round of discussion as well, at Russia's insistence, and despite Georgia's trepidation that these actions could be viewed as international recognition of the regions. Georgian representatives were insistent that those regional representatives from Abkhazia and South Ossetia who were still loyal to Georgia should also be allowed to participate. The positive outcome of this meeting is in stark contrast to the talks held earlier in October, in which the EU and other international groups participated, that revealed only how far apart Russia and Georgia stood on major issues.³²⁰

Despite the positive outcomes of the November working groups, the meetings in Geneva between Russia and Georgia in December went poorly in the sense that while peace negotiations have managed to ease some tension, no accord was established at the Geneva talks that would help establish international observer mechanisms for the separatist regions. Neither Russia, nor the representatives from South Ossetia or Abkhazia would permit international observers to have access to the territory within their control. The EU mission was also having serious troubles with their mandate for the same reason—their inability to regularly access both South Ossetia and Abkhazia.³²¹

For this reason, the OSCE mission, which was established in 1992 as a means to promote dialogue between South Ossetia and Georgia, was shut-down on December 22,

³²⁰ Jonathan Lynn, "Russia, Georgia meet to ease Caucasus tensions," *Reuters*, November 19, 2008, <http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-36587620081119>

³²¹ Alexander Higgins, "EU: Russia-Georgia talks fall short of accord," *Associated Press*, December 18, 2008, http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=9064&Itemid=67

2008. The OSCE chairman, Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, attempted to compromise with Russia, who saw the extension of the OSCE mandate as illegal, given their recognition of South Ossetia's recognition. He suggested that there should be independent field offices set up for South Ossetia and Georgia. These offices would both be supervised by a special envoy who would monitor OSCE activities on both sides of the de-facto border between Georgia and South Ossetia. Russia's alternative cited Kosovo and Macedonia as precedence; that the OSCE could work towards setting up separate and independent offices in Tbilisi, Tshkinvali and Sukhumi. This would not be the first time the OSCE set up offices in countries that are not recognized by all OSCE member states. Commenting on the situation, Alexander Stubb stated: "The OSCE still has much work to do in the region. Despite the situation today I hope that negotiations on future OSCE activities in Georgia can be continued next year."³²²

Assessment

The war between Russia and Georgia in summer 2008 represented an important turning point for post-Soviet Eurasia. For one, it was the first time that Russia invaded a neighbor since the Soviet collapse, which shows clearly that Russia is willing to use force to ensure its own security interests. Second, Russia attacked a member of the CIS, and formally recognized two breakaway republics. The implication of this is that Russia went against the post-Soviet order, which was based on the inviolability of the borders established when the Republics became independent. Third, Russia clearly showed that it

³²² Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Georgia: Russia says 'nyet' to extending OSCE field mission mandate," *Eurasianet.org*, December 22, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav122208a.shtml>

is in charge of the Near Abroad, and will not give up areas of vital interest, such as Georgia, to other powers, which include the EU, NATO and the United States. The era of the geopolitical power vacuum, which existed after the Soviet Collapse, and the expansion of the “Western Neighborhood” is now directly impinging on Russian interests and security. As such, Russia’s military intervention in Georgia represents the first time since the late 1930s and early 1940s that unilateral changes to Europe’s internationally recognized borders have occurred.³²³

There were three important goals behind Russia’s provocation of Georgia, each with its own timeframe. The initial goal of the war was to reassert Russia’s preeminent position in the peacekeeping operation, and to create a situation where Russia continues to be in charge of the peacekeeping operations, thus not allowing any internationalization of this mission. The second goal overlapped with the first in terms of timeframe, and this was to capture Georgian villages in South Ossetia and force ethnic Georgians to leave, and then to repeat this in the Kodori Gorge, which was loyal to Tbilisi, but is not anymore. Finally, the last goal, which was achieved in December, was to ensure that Georgia would not be granted MAP status in NATO.³²⁴ This war had very much to do with drawing a clear dividing line to show to NATO, Europe and the West, where their limits lay. This is a line that Russia believes should never be crossed.³²⁵

As such, Russia has been able to show that it is in control of events in the region. Russia’s provocations came as early as April, after the Bucharest Summit, when

³²³ Torbakov, “Post-Soviet Eurasia enters a new era,” September 17, 2008; Coppiters, “The August Wars,” October 31, 2008; Illarionov, “Another Look at the August War,” December 9, 2008.

³²⁴ Vladimir Socor, “The goals behind Moscow’s proxy offensive in South Ossetia,” *Jamestown Foundation*, August 8, 2008,

http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5433&Itemid=65

³²⁵ A Scripted War,” *The Economist*, August 14.

they increased their relationship with Abkhazia and South Ossetia to the point where it was clear that this action was akin to de-facto annexation. According to Pavel Felgenhaur, a military analyst who has close ties to the Russian military establishment, illegally increasing the number of “peacekeeping” troops (in reality, they were combat units armed with heavy weaponry) and the deployment of Railroad troops in Abkhazia (the rail line was pivotal for Russia troops to send tanks and heavy equipment for military intervention in Western Georgia), violating airspace, and massive military exercises along the border with South Ossetia, were all measures designed to increase the tension, and put pressure of Georgia. Furthermore, after the military exercises, the Russian troops continued to be stationed along the border separating Russia and Georgia—that is, along the border with South Ossetia—in a heightened state of readiness, which is not typical practice following military exercises.³²⁶

After the Georgian military exercise, there was also unusual behavior from the Georgian military. Saakashvili sent part of the army to South Ossetia, and rather than being divided between Senaki and Gori, the artillery brigade was entirely stationed in Gori. Both countries were engaging in a delicate military song and dance, but it was clear that Russia would emerge victorious, because the Russian army is much stronger than the Georgian army: 48 Russian soldiers for every 1 Georgian soldier.³²⁷

As Georgians and South Ossetian fighting began increasing and becoming more dangerous in early August, Saakashvili decreed a ceasefire. Russia claims that he broke this ceasefire, but hoped that “these idiots would have enough common sense to stop at

³²⁶ Павел Фельгенгауэр, “Это была не спонтанная, а спланированная война,” *Новая Газета*, August 14, 2008, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2008/59/04.html>; Whitmore, “Did Russia plan its war in Georgia?” August 16, 2008; Spiegel Staff, “Road to War in Georgia: the Chronicle of a Caucasian tragedy,” August 25, 2008.

³²⁷ Spiegel Staff, “Road to War in Georgia: the Chronicle of a Caucasian tragedy,” August 25, 2008.

some point”³²⁸ but Georgian officials state that it was South Ossetian fighters who are responsible. While this is unclear and rife with conflicting evidence and testimony, what is more concrete is the very quick movement of Russian troops through the Roki Tunnel, which connects South Ossetia to North Ossetia. It was the same the same troops, which were involved in the “Kavkaz 2008” military exercises along the Georgian border. This suggests that they were completely prepared for their military intervention; they clearly knew it was coming.³²⁹ In this way, Russia was then able to intervene and protect its “citizens” in South Ossetia. However, if that was all Russia was interested in doing, the military never would have crossed the de-facto borders between the separatist enclaves and Georgia, and attack Georgia-proper.

The speed with which Russia was able to mobilize its troops into South Ossetia suggests that this war was planned well in advance, waiting only for a reason, and of course when a war is planned in advance, it is easy to find this reason; furthermore, interviewed Russian soldiers stated that some soldiers began marching towards, and crossing through the Roki Tunnel, separating North and South Ossetia in the early hours of the morning, almost immediately after the ceasefire was violated, with more soldiers following very shortly thereafter. It did not come before fighting between the two sides escalated, but it happened so quickly that it could only have been planned in advance.³³⁰

In his annual speech to the Parliament, and his remarks at the 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Saakashvili emphasized this key idea, which is the

³²⁸ “Стенографический отчет о встрече с участниками международного клуба «Валдай»,” September 12, 2008.

³²⁹ Robert Cutler, “Russia’s Disinformation Campaign over South Ossetia,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 10, no. 16 (August 20, 2008): 6-8, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/files/080820Analyst.pdf>; “A Scripted War,” August 14, 2008.

³³⁰ Фельгенгауэр, “Это была не спонтанная, а спланированная война,” August 14, 2008; Whitmore, “Did Russia plan its war in Georgia?” August 16, 2008; “Countdown in the Caucasus,” August 26, 2008; Cornell, “Another Look at the August War,” December 9, 2008.

very core of resistance identity: that Russia is an aggressor who tried to destroy Georgia. A central tenant of resistance identity is the memory of 1921 and the annexation by the Soviet Union: “Do not believe those who say that we have won; but do not either believe those who tell you that we have been defeated. They can see examples of losing—they can see these examples in the recent history—in 1921—when Georgia was united with the Soviet Union by force and was deprived of freedom.”³³¹ Another current example that has been internalized is the way Russia manipulated the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, forcing Georgia to accept Russia’s peacekeeping format, and impinging on Georgian sovereignty with it. He stresses that he tried to warn the world that Russia would act out against Georgia, to try and “destroy love our nation towards freedom.” He also explicitly mentions that Russia engaged in dangerous provocations against Georgia, because of their neoimperialistic drive, but also states that “More democracy is Georgia’s respon[se] to Russian aggression³³² and this “This amounts to nothing less than a ‘Second Rose Revolution.’”³³³ To this effect, Saakashvili lists several key areas of reform to help with this task.³³⁴ Rather than defeat Georgia, it seems Russia’s actions pushed the country more firmly towards the Westward path.

When President Medvedev addressed the Federal Assembly in November, his speech blamed Georgia for the crisis, and also suggested that it was a Western conspiracy to first get NATO ships into the Black Sea, and then to speed up the imposition of missile defense system in Europe that Russia is so opposed to. He refers to the Russians as

³³¹ Mikheil Saakashvili, “The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili’s annual speech presented in the Parliament of Georgia,” September 16, 2008, <http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=3&st=10&id=2740>

³³² Saakashvili, “Annual speech presented in the Parliament of Georgia,” September 16, 2008.

³³³ Mikheil Saakashvili, “Remarks at the 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly,” September 23, 2008, <http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=3&st=10&id=2746>

³³⁴ Saakashvili, “Remarks at the 63rd Session,” September 23, 2008; Saakashvili, “annual speech presented in the Parliament of Georgia,” September 16, 2008.

having the destiny of a great people, and because of this, there are things that cannot be given up without a fight that leads to ultimate victory, because there are certain things Russia will never give up, regardless of circumstance. The Russians have a rich heritage, and unique culture, a long thousand-year history and are responsible for civilizing vast territories. All this taken together is why Russia must continue to firmly protect the Caucasus. When discussing the particulars of the conflict, he stresses that all measures taken were to save Russian citizens in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Regarding the conflict, Medvedev is insistent in Russia's adherence to international law, particularly in relation to the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. He accuses the international community of double standards in criticizing Russia for this, citing Kosovo as precedent. Of particular importance, he states that, Russia will continue to work towards eliminating areas in neighboring regions (Nagorno-Karabakh and Transdniestria) that could potentially cause conflict, using international law as the starting point. Medvedev also draws an interesting conclusion from the events of the summer: he suggests that Russia proved to the world that it will protect Russian citizens, defend national interests and uphold peacekeeping its peacekeeping duties. He also explicitly mentions that the army and navy is being re-equipped with more modern weapons so that their combat potential is restored.³³⁵

As Vladimir Papava writes, and is evident by Medvedev's speech: "Filtered through the prism of Moscow's twisted logic, the West pushed Russia into making the move into Georgia." Russia's motives were also largely dictated by their nostalgia for empire. Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia was done with the pretense

³³⁵ Д.А. Медведев, "Послание Федеральному Собранию Российской Федерации," November 5, 2008. <http://kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/11/208749.shtml>

of protecting its citizens, although the citizenship was granted long before their independence was declared. Drawing on the Kosovo parallel, Russia seems to have ignored the fact that when Kosovo was declared independent, no other country attempted to force Kosovars to accept citizenship beforehand. With the puppet governments already installed in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and with citizenship granted, it can only be a matter of time before Russia will instruct both “countries” to hold a referendum about incorporation into the Russian Federation. Similarly to what happened with the war in Georgia, and with the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia will then claim that Russia had no choice but to absorb Abkhazia and South Ossetia, due to the double standards of the international community in not recognizing them.³³⁶

³³⁶ Vladimir Papava, “Russia: being in the Kremlin means never letting go,” *Eurasianet.org*, November 5, 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav110508a.shtml>

Conclusion

Manifestations of the National Identity and Foreign Policy Dynamic

National identity is a crucial factor in determining a country's foreign policy orientation. In this thesis, I have sought to examine this via the relationship between Russia and Georgia. In Russia, neoimperialism dictates how Russia behaves internationally, and is particularly important when assessing Russia's relationship with Georgia. I defined neoimperialism as the belief that Russia is, was and always will remain a Great Power. In order to secure this status at an international level, Russia seeks to establish an informal empire and dominate over countries that were once part of both Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, but are now deemed independent by the international community. Neoimperialism includes matters pertinent to both economic and security concerns, but zero-sum thinking is the dominant means to relate to world and regional powers in all respects: if it is good for someone else, it is bad for Russia. Russian neoimperialism has manifested itself in many ways, including control over peacekeeping mandates, which it refuses to internationalize. Also, the integration of Eurasia into the Euro-Atlantic community is unacceptable and Russia will ensure that this does not happen. Neoimperialism is a dangerous ideology that undermines stability in the region.

In direct opposition, Georgia is driven by an intense desire to sever the connection between its country and Russia, which is explained conceptually through the concept of resistance identity, which formed around three key events: the Russian annexation of Georgia in 1801, the Soviet occupation of Georgia in 1921, and Russia's inappropriate

conduct in Abkhazia and South Ossetia during the 1990s and more recently. Georgia wishes to be a western style democratic country, and Euro-Atlantic integration is seen as the key to secure this. This clashes with Russia's strategic goals for the region. Neoimperialism and resistance identity are diametrically opposed concepts. What Russia and Georgia desire are at complete opposite ends of the spectrum.

The formation of national identity is both a constructed and real process, in the sense that in order to create something, there must be a basis on which to create, a foundation of association and culture to bind people together, with a common history upon which to expand. Building upon this understanding of the nation, nationalism is the expression of the nation for autonomy, unity and the preservation of group identity. In order to legitimize nationalism, ethnic myths are a crucial element; they represent useable history, particularly in evoking the group's glorious past to help formulate visions for the future. History is an important means for nationalists to influence and exploit the masses, as well as to instigate social change. Also, because of its malleability, history can be manipulated to serve the particular needs associated with the nationalist project. In turn, this affects the creation of a master myth, which is the symbolic framework used by a society to define threats and appropriate responses to them. Historically, Russia developed an imperial identity before any conception of national identity was consolidated. Russia's location at the cusp of three distinct civilizations, and Russia's own ambiguity of where exactly the country fit, was also an important element in its imperial mission. On the other hand, Georgia's national identity was formed in direct opposition to Russian imperialism, based entirely around independence from the Russian empire.

The imperial relationship between Russia and Georgia is best described as ambiguous. When Eastern Georgia appealed to Russia for help in the late eighteenth century, there was no unified Georgia to speak of. After the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, Georgia broke up into various principalities, some remaining independent, others being absorbed by various empires. Georgia only became united again because of Russian imperialism: after the annexation of Eastern Georgia in 1801, which was against the spirit of the 1787 Treaty of Georgievsk, principalities of western Georgia were integrated into the Russian Empire and with Georgia over the course of the century. While on one hand, a united Georgia and the emergence of Georgian national consciousness in the 19th century is very much a result of Russian imperialism, Russia's actions towards a fellow Christian nation raise many questions.

During the imperial period, Russia and Georgia engaged in two differing versions of nationalism. Russian 'official nationalism' was a movement that sought to enforce a particular state-sponsored vision of state, nation and society onto the entire population within the empire. Under Nicholas I (1825-1855) this took the form of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality.' Orthodoxy and autocracy are fairly clear, but there was a certain degree of ambivalence regarding what nationality (*narodnost'*) encompassed. I believe that it was a means to facilitate Russian hegemony in the empire, although the religious aspect set a clear limit. To that end, I used the writing of Nikolai Danilevsky, to analyze this official formula, because I firmly believe that Official Eurasianism shares some commonalities with what Danilevsky wrote, particularly as it pertains to Autocracy and Nationality.

The formula also had clear implications for Russia and Georgia's historical relationship. Because Georgia is an ancient Christian nation, adopting Christianity centuries before Russia, Georgians could arguably identify with all the markers of official Russian nationalism. However, this, in turn, raised some very important questions about Russian tactics and intentions. Russia could not legitimately use the civilizing discourse of bringing Christianity to the savages, but instead could claim to be protecting Christian Georgia from the Muslim tribes and empires that surrounded it. At the same time, Russians always cast Georgia as the primitive Asiatic, a country, which needed the European civilization Russia was providing. Nowhere is this more evident than in Romantic era Russia discourse, which was used to advance Russia's imperial interests. In order to bolster and justify Russia's position in Georgia, Russian authors imagined and projected primitive and less civilized qualities onto Georgia to indicate that Georgia required Russian civilization. Russia authors also feminized Georgia, to indicate that the country needed Russian protection.

The Georgian response to official state-sponsored Russian nationalism was cultural nationalism, a movement that evokes the golden age as a means to critique the present situation, and to help the community strive towards higher stages of development. Georgian intelligentsia began searching their history, which became a focal point of national pride. Of particular importance in this nationalist quest was the place of the Georgian language, which was suffering due to intense Russification policies. This became much more pronounced during the reign of Alexander III, whose counter-reforms greatly limited the emerging Georgian national sentiments and actively repressed

Georgian nationalism. Into the twentieth century, Marxism flourished, with the Menshevik's vision of social democracy ultimately taking hold of Georgia.

Georgia's brief flirtation with independence after the fall of the Russian Empire is an important historical memory for the current Georgian regime. As in 1801, 1921 represents a moment where Russia thwarted Georgian independence, although in 1921, it was the Soviet Union. Georgia's Soviet experiences during Stalin's reign had important implications for Georgian nationalism in later decades. For instance, Georgia's primarily peasant economy was completely transformed into an urban and industrial society. Also, Stalin's nationalities policies resulted in a cultural revival of sorts in Georgia and created more group cohesion. The quasi-federal structure of the Soviet Union, with Georgia as the titular republic, also led to a modified great power chauvinism being applied to Georgian ethnic minorities, the results of which are still affecting Georgia's relationship with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Beginning in 1956, the first open act of Georgian nationalism in forty years, national awareness continued to grow and tensions bubbled to the surface. The 1956 riots dealt explicitly with de-Stalinization, which was viewed as being anti-Georgian. At this time, not enough information was available about the horrible crimes Stalin committed, and for Georgians, Stalin's achievements were a source of pride, being as Stalin was Georgian. Much like the ambiguity that marked Georgia's relationship with Imperialist Russia, the 1956 riots highlight the ambiguity of Georgia's relationship with the Soviet central government in Moscow. On one hand, the increased group cohesion and increasing national awareness was a direct result of Stalin's rule. On the other, the fear of losing their unique national character because of the rapid modernization was also a

legacy of Stalinism. Both of these instilled the youth with a strong sense of national pride, and a commitment to the Georgian nation. Another instance that clearly indicated the emergence of Georgian nationalism occurred in 1978, with the government attempted to remove Georgian as the sole official state language of the republic. Riots erupted and the idea was dropped.

While the Soviet Union blurred Russia's imperial identity, with Russian being the dominant language of the bureaucracy, and communist historiography reinforcing the link between Russian identity and empire, the Soviet collapse ultimately shows that nationalism emerged triumphant over the communist empire. When the USSR collapsed, Russia's collective identity fell back onto what it knew: its imperial and Soviet narrative and these were used to form the basis for Russian statehood in the post-Soviet world order.

The implications for this became apparently in Georgia, as deep ethnic divisions combined with extreme Georgian nationalism resulted in three civil wars, and the formation of two separatist enclaves, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The civil war with Abkhazia was fought at the same time as the civil war within Georgia to oust Zviad Gamsakhurdia, whose extreme nationalist rhetoric fanned the ethnic tensions that had been in existence since Soviet times. Much like the eighteenth century where Georgia was forced to appeal for Russian help in order to maintain some degree of independence, the Shevardnadze administration appealed for Russia's help to end the civil wars. In return, Georgia was forced to join the CIS, an important tool for Russian hegemony in the former Soviet Union. As it pertained to the Abkhaz situation, there was an interesting twist in the situation as Russia actively supported the Abkhaz separatist movement.

Despite this, they still interceded as peacekeepers. Russia also played a peacekeeping role in the South Ossetian conflict.

Russia's neoimperialism, encompassed by Official Eurasianism, is an expression of Russia's national project, which is dictated by a country's national interests. National identity plays an important role in the understanding of these interests, which are then manifested through foreign policy. In Georgia, the national project is to join the community of western nations, as predicated by resistance identity.

Foreign policy is dependent upon a shared sense of national identity. This is greatly impacted by group myths and interpretations of history. As such, national identity is an intermediary variable between reality and state behavior. This is a central tenant of Critical Geopolitics, an important theory for understanding both Russian and Georgian foreign policy behavior. Within that, the concept of a nation as "power projector" is particularly significant as it pertains to Russian foreign policy actions. I also used the national identity dynamic as a means to explain how identity functions as a factor of the mass national public, government foreign policy and how the nation understands its relationship with the international community. Because of the relationship between the factors, I used speeches as a means to analyze Russian and Georgian foreign policy behavior, as well as foreign policy documents.

Russian foreign policy is best encapsulated by Official Eurasianism, which is driven by geopolitical considerations. This concept encompasses key assumptions about Russia as a civilization that is unique, because of its position between Europe and Asia. As such, Russia is a Eurasian power, whose strategic goal is to stabilize the heartland and act as a buffer between east and west. Within this assumption is the belief that Russia is

the rightful hegemon of the region, and the country pursues policies to this effect; for instance, the idea of *derzhava* or Russia's great power status is intrinsically tied to restoring Russian influence in the Near Abroad. Russia's dalliances in Georgia's separatist conflicts, for example, stem from Russia's belief in *derzhava*. Without the Near Abroad, Russia cannot be a great power, and cannot influence the international system. Russia is a "power projector," a country, which acts outside of its legal borders to affect the world order. Power projection activities are laden with ideological assumptions that inform Russia's behavior, and as such, originate at the domestic level. In Russia, this behavior is based around Official Eurasianism, and within that, neoimperialism.

Georgia's foreign policy, which is directly opposite to Russia's, is based around Georgia's desire to join the community of western nations and to finally separate itself from its Russian and Soviet past, as well as from the turbulence that gripped the country during the 1990s. The 2003 Rose Revolution symbolized Georgia's commitment to becoming a western style liberal democracy. This manifested itself in Georgia's foreign policy behavior, which is based around three key issues: independence, territorial integrity and Euro-Atlantic integration. Showing the importance of historical interpretation, the Georgian government will often cite Georgia as an ancient European nation, whose values and national interests are rooted in European values and traditions.

The clash between Russian and Georgian foreign policies is very clearly evident, and in my opinion, best encapsulated by the issue of NATO enlargement, which Russia is adamantly opposed to. Russia's attitude towards NATO potentially accepting Georgia as a member of the alliance raises two very important issues: first, Russia is clearly trying to

dictate the way in which a sovereign country pursues its foreign and security policy; secondly, Russia's rationalization of NATO as a potential aggressor is based on zero-sum thinking, and not actual policies. As such, NATO represents a threat against Russia's regional and international role.

Russia's reactions against NATO can be explained historically within the framework of Official Eurasianism. Russia's conquest of the North Caucasus was dependent upon Russia controlling the South Caucasus. When the Soviet Union collapsed, a similar pattern emerged: before attempting to subdue Chechen separatists, Russia first secured its position in Georgia. This is characteristic with Putin's establishment of a precise formula towards the Near Abroad, which began under Yeltsin; Putin consolidated what the previous president had started. As it pertained to Georgia, it was Russia's goal to establish that this was Russia's sphere of influence. When Russia effectively crushed the rebels in Chechnya during the Second Chechen War and quelled the threat of secession, Russia was able to more openly support the separatist regions in Georgia. As such, the border with Abkhazia was re-opened, and the visa regime that was put in place for Georgia was not extended towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia also began granting Russian citizenship to residents in both separatist enclaves, a policy which became a very important dimension of the Russian-Georgian war and subsequent recognition of the enclaves.

NATO has been an important institution in terms of helping Georgia reform militarily and more importantly, has been crucial in terms of helping Georgia establish more firmly the rule of law and democratic reforms. Examples of this include the Partnership for Peace Program and Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). However,

once Georgia entered the ID stage of its relationship with NATO in September, 2006 Russia quickly reacted by imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Georgia. This included the deportation of ethnic Georgians from Russia, as well as banning postal links, and air, sea, land and railway travel between Russia and Georgia. Oil, natural gas and electricity also became vehicles for Russia to exact punishment onto Georgia. Georgia was left without gas for one week in the winter, as well as completely without natural gas, and 25% of its electricity. The irony is that Russia's attempt to intimidate Georgia have not yielded the exact results the Russian government desired; Russia's actions have pushed Georgia further towards democracy and reform.

The one area where Russia has been able to intercede and flex its muscles in the region have been via Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These regions would not be able to stay afloat without Russian political and economic aid. Over the years, Russia's actions have resulted in de-facto annexation of the regions. However, after Kosovo received international recognition of independence, Russia's actions became more explicit, as sanctions imposed by CIS states on Abkhazia were officially lifted. The situation continued to become more tense after the Bucharest Summit.

The 2008 Bucharest Summit represented a very difficult moment for both Russia and Georgia. Not knowing whether Georgia would be given MAP status, just prior to the summit, Russia lifted the air ban with Georgia, which was hailed as a positive first step in their tense relationship. However, when the decision on MAP status was put aside until December 2008, the situation quickly deteriorated, and culminated in full-scale war in August 2008. These actions included opening direct trade, transportation and political links between Russia and both regions, as well as shooting down an unmanned Georgian

reconnaissance drone over Abkhazia. This was followed by Russia unilaterally increasing the number of their peacekeepers in Abkhazia, without going through the proper international mechanisms. These actions are not shocking, considering the Russian government also insisted that should Georgia join NATO, it would do so without Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The war that occurred in August 2008 resulted in Russia's official recognition of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and well as Georgia not receiving MAP status in December 2008. Rather, Georgia and NATO entered the Annual National Program (ANP). Ultimately, the NATO decision was an opportunity for Russia to show Georgia and the organization that Russia was serious about its hegemonic role in the region, and that it would not give up this position without a fight. It also demonstrated the inherent instability of the region, which certainly factored into NATO's decision.

States treat other states differently based on whether they are friendly or not. Perception is an important element in foreign policy behavior, and one which is tempered by national identity. Prior to the outbreak of war, with the situation continuing to escalate, Russia and Georgia were already suspicious of the other's intentions. This resulted in a security dilemma, with Russia in an offensive position, and Georgia turning to aggressive actions because the country felt threatened by its aggressive neighbor, Russia. The action-reaction dynamic became evident as events unfolded in the region, which Georgia ultimately assuming worst-case scenario thinking, and falling into a trap to take counter-measures against Russia. Georgia's pre-emptive strike against South Ossetia instigated exactly what the Saakashvili government feared Russia was going to do: recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

While Abkhazia and South Ossetia are technically within Georgia's borders, Russia granting citizenship to residents of the regions, as well as other means of political, economic and social support, has blurred the lines as to the nature of this conflict. On one hand, it is an intra-state conflict between the central government and two separatist enclaves; on the other, it is really an inter-state conflict between Russia and Georgia. However, given the Georgian government's belief that both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are integral parts of Georgia, the societal security dilemma provided another dimension to explain the conflict, particularly why Georgia launched a pre-emptive strike. Societal security is based around protecting a group's dominant identity construct, which plays a key role in how the group defines its security and foreign policy. As the case in Georgia demonstrates, it is often based around issues of political autonomy and territorial integrity.

While Georgia did make the initial move into South Ossetia, Russia was very prepared for war and acted very disproportionately. While both groups are responsible for the fighting that occurred, the cards were ultimately in Russia's hands. For Russia, a major trigger for this war stemmed from the fact that the country could not accept the loss of its empire. Also, Russia never truly regarded the former Soviet Republics as independent and sovereign countries. This manifested itself in Russia's campaign to delegitimize Georgian history through historical revisionism and to denigrate its leadership, both in the attempt to bolster Russia's position in the region.

Prior to the war, Russia's actions were extremely provocative. First, the government de-facto annexed Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Following this, the Russian military downed a Georgian reconnaissance drone over Abkhazia, which they

vehemently denied, but were ultimately deemed responsible for by the UN. More alarming, Russia unilaterally and illegally increased the number of peacekeepers in Abkhazia, which further highlighted that they could not be regarded as impartial peacekeepers in the area. Also, Russian Railway forces were deployed to the region to reconstruct and repair existing railway infrastructure, which would be key to supply the Russian military during the war. An assassination attempt on Dimitri Sanakoev, head of the pro-Georgian South Ossetian government was then followed by another Russian violation of Georgian airspace, designed to “cool hot heads in Tbilisi.” The final provocation involved both sides: both Russia and Georgia were involved in intense military exercises on either side of the Caucasus in July-early August.

The war quickly spread from South Ossetia, with Russia invading Georgia. Even after an EU brokered cease-fire, Russia continued its campaign to show Tbilisi who is in charge of the region. The clearest example of this is found in Russia’s official recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the announcement that Russia would build land, sea and air bases in the regions. This would ensure Russia’s position of military strength in the South Caucasus and Black Sea region, and would allow Russia to preemptively respond to any attempts by NATO to strengthen their relationship with Georgia. Another important element of the war was Russia’s disdain for international peacekeeping forces, which were eventually forced out because they were unable to fulfill their mission, as they could not access Abkhazia or South Ossetia.

This war between Russia and Georgia greatly altered the post-Soviet space, as it represented the first time that Russia invaded a sovereign state since the Soviet collapse. This military intervention is also the first time since the late 1930s, early 1940s, that

Europe's internationally recognized borders were changed unilaterally. This war also allowed Russia to reassert its hegemonic and neoimperial position in the region. By forcing ethnic Georgians to leave South Ossetia, and by the Kodori Gorge being captured by Abkhazia, Russia has further ensured its control over these regions. Lastly, Russia ensured that Georgia would not be granted MAP status in December, showing NATO that it was serious and not just issuing empty threats about the consequences of Georgia joining NATO. The war highlighted the instability of the region, which certainly affected NATO's decision. As such, rather than MAP, ANP was implemented so that the country would continue on its path to reform.

Russia stressed that Kosovo would serve as a precedent for any actions that it undertook in Abkhazia or South Ossetia, but the analogy is extremely weak. Russia's zero-sum thinking ultimately sees Georgia and the West as being responsible for the crisis, forcing Russia to move into Georgia, in order to protect Russian citizens. That citizenship was granted long before the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was declared by Russia does not register as problematic by the Russian government. They continue to use the Kosovo analogy, despite the fact that no country attempted to force citizens of Kosovo to accept any citizenship before their independence was declared. The citizenship issue is a core difference between Georgia's separatist enclaves and Kosovo, and played a crucial role in creating the necessary preconditions for conflict. Furthermore, Russia's political and economic support for the region has ensured loyalty to Russia, as well as the means to install Russian puppet governments to further instill this sense of loyalty.

The war that occurred this summer between Russia and Georgia was the natural culmination of two countries pursuing competing foreign policies based on diametrically opposed conceptions of national identity. It also shows the inherent dangers of both neoimperialism and resistance identity. These identity constructs are not only dangerous because of the violence that they ultimately led to, they are dangerous because they cloud the judgment of both countries. Russia's focus on exerting power over the Near Abroad in order to influence the international order is hypocritical, at best. Russia claims to believe in the supremacy of international law, and in the United Nations Security Council, but this is not truly the reality. Russia's interest in the UN Security Council is such that Russia has veto power, and it allows Russia to influence world affairs. In the realm of international law, Russia continuously breaks major principles of international law but continues to espouse the virtues of it.

The most telling examples revolve around the events of this past summer. Had Russia kept its operations limited to South Ossetia, Russia would have been acting lawfully to protect Russian peacekeepers in the area. However, by invading Georgia, Russia showed very clearly that this military excursion was not about protecting Russian citizens. It was about intimidating a neighbor, all in the name of Russia's great power status. Invading a sovereign neighbor is an act of aggression, according to international law, yet Russia completely disregarded that. Russia recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia, despite the international community's objections, and despite the fact that it goes against resolutions passed by the UN. This represents a destabilizing factor in international politics because it could potentially enable other states to undertake similar policies.

On the other hand, resistance identity is also extremely dangerous, but for different reasons than neoimperialism. As resistance identity posits, Georgia views Russia as the biggest threat to its security and its very sovereignty. As tangible as this threat is, automatically placing the blame on Russian meddling for all things that go wrong in Georgia undermines Georgian security and sovereignty. Ignoring real problems or not devising proper solutions weakens the country, and in fact, allows Russia to meddle more easily. The Georgian government's decision to try and take back South Ossetia by force was ill-planned and ill-advised. It was a strategic blunder of epic proportions caused by the deep-seated fear of Russia undermining Georgian sovereignty and security. By acting first, Georgia accomplished exactly what the government feared most: it has lost Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It has also in a way legitimized Russia's actions of recognizing the independence of these regions, because it makes Georgia look irrational, violent and incapable of solving the conflicts diplomatically. The ultimate result of the war this summer was that Russia emerged having met its strategic goals for the region.

National identity is a potent factor in how actors perceive and react to events. It plays a key role in the formulation of foreign policy, as it helps delineate national goals and interests. History and how it is interpreted is an important element within this dynamic. However, Russia and Georgia are not trapped in their respective identity constructs, nor do their foreign policies have to continue to clash as a result. How elites and intelligentsia choose to interpret history is important. The messages, which they impart on their citizens and the policies that are put in place to this effect, make a difference. As I started the introduction, and as Suny writes: "The key to the future lies

in what a people select from its past, how it images itself as a community and continues to remake itself as a nation.”³³⁷

³³⁷ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 335.

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