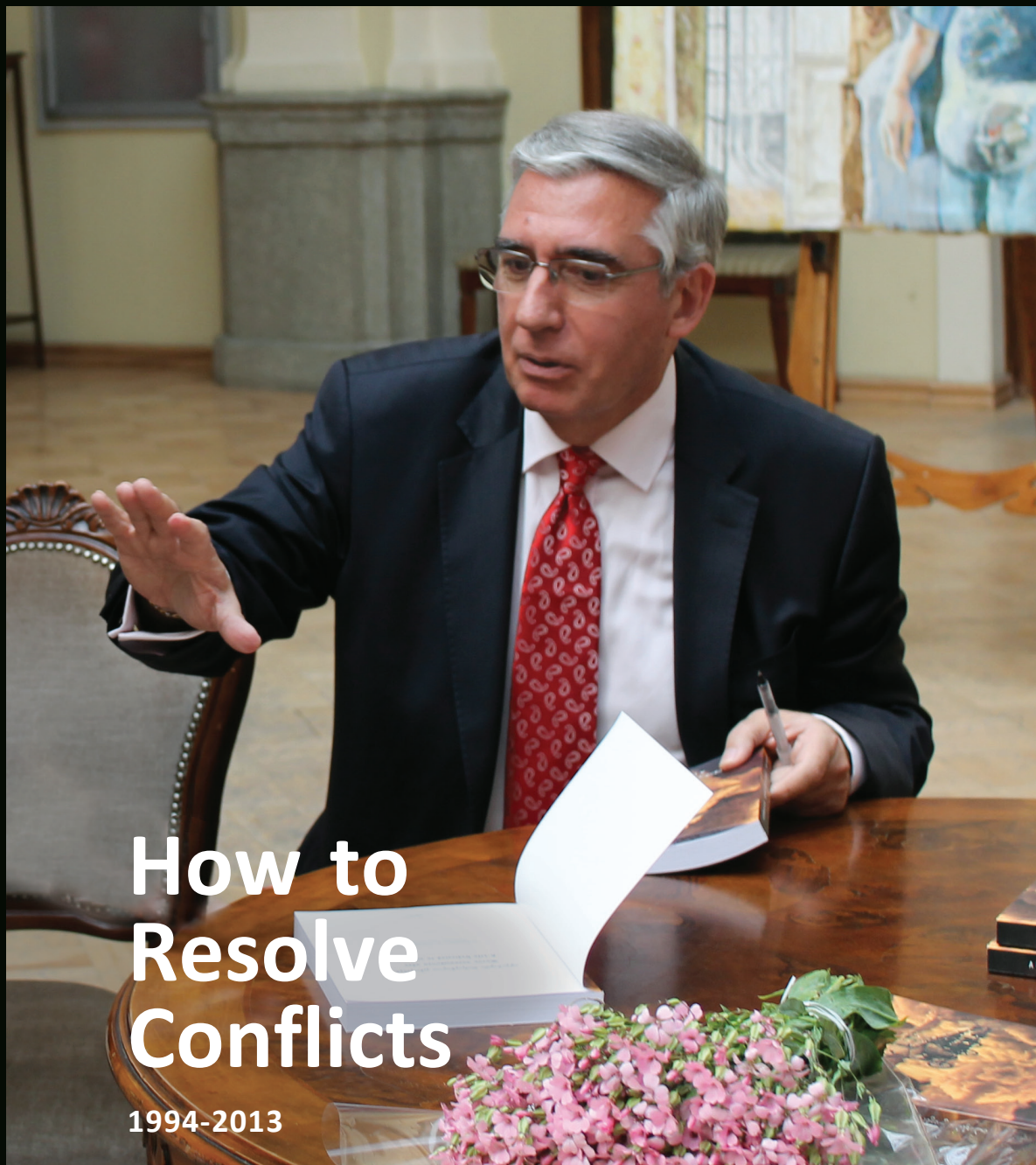


# GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI



## How to Resolve Conflicts

1994-2013

Book IV

# GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI

## HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS

BOOK IV

Compiler, Editor

NINA TSIKHISTAVI-KHUTSISHVILI

Tbilisi  
2018

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**GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI**

**HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS**

**Book IV**

*"George Khutsishvili: How to Resolve Conflicts", Book IV – presents selection of 1993-2013 original English language interviews and analytical articles by Georgian scientist of Peace and Conflict Studies, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor George Khutsishvili (1948-2013). The following publication is intended for researchers in the field of peace and conflict studies and broader spectrum of readers as well.*

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to Victoria-Sophia





# CONTENTS

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK.....	IX
ABOUT GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI BY DR. DIETER BODEN, AMBASSADOR, (RET.).....	XI
ABOUT GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI BY DR. JOHAN GALTUNG .....	XV
ABOUT GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI WAS A HERO FOR ME, BY DR. JOHN W. MCDONALD, AMBASSADOR, (RET.).....	XVII
AUTHOR’S PREFACE BY GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI .....	1
ETHNICITY, FEDERALISM AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN RUSSIA .....	3
FELLOWSHIP BRINGS UNIQUE GEORGIAN PERSPECTIVE TO STANFORD .....	6
INTERVENTION IN TRANSCAUCASUS.....	9
DEMOCRACY OR NATIONAL-SOZIALISMUS? (Russia’s choice and the post-Soviet prospect).....	15
NATIONALISM: ISOLATION AND INTEGRATION TREND (THE CASE OF GEORGIA).....	33
ETHNIC CONFLICT IN GEORGIA .....	43
THE DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT: GEORGIA AND THE POST-SOVIET CAUCASUS .....	76
SHEVARDNADZE SET TO RULE OVER THE DIVIDED .....	89
INGROUP PSYCHOLOGY OF POST-TOTALITARIAN COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF GEORGIA .....	92
CONSOLIDATION OR NEW CONFLICT .....	100
SECURITY PROBLEMS IN GEORGIA IN THE LIGHT OF THE CONFLICT IN FORMER SOUTH OSSETIA.....	105
A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE CAUCASUS .....	112
TOWARDS A MORE SECURE CAUCASUS: OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP “DEVELOPING A REGIONAL SECURITY CONCEPT FOR THE CAUCASUS” .....	117
THE ROOTS OF POST-SOVIET CONFLICT: A DIE-HARD LEGACY .....	125
ETHNICITY AND DEMOCRACY IN GEORGIA: RIVALS OR ALLIES? A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE .....	146
GEORGIA AND THE CAUCASUS IN TRANSITION: THE SECURITY ASPECTS.....	149
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF EMPIRE.....	172
THE OSCE AND CONFLICT IN GEORGIA.....	177
“PERSONS OF CAUCASIAN NATIONALITY” .....	191
A COUNTRY BETWEEN ASSAULTS.....	198
GEORGIA’S SECURITY PROBLEMS IN POST-SOVIET TRANSITION .....	206

THE CAUCASUS AND EUROPE.....	226
ON REFUSING TO UNDERSTAND .....	230
UNDERSTANDING SEPARATISM, OR THE PARADOX OF PART AND WHOLE REVISITED .....	248
ACTUAL SITUATION OF GEORGIA IN 1998 .....	251
HOW CAN CITIZEN DIPLOMACY SUCCEED WHEN AN “OFFICIAL” DIPLOMACY FAILS? (THE CASE OF ABKHAZIA).....	260
NGOS IN THE NIS: TRANSCENDING POST-TOTALITARIANISM IN PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS (THE CASE OF GEORGIA).....	265
LIMITS OF POWER DISTRIBUTION IN GEORGIA AND THE ABKHAZIA DILEMMA: ANALYSIS VS PERCEPTIONS.....	269
THE ROLE OF THE CIS CONFERENCE IN PEACE-BUILDING, CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT, AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION IN GEORGIA (THE YEARS 1996-2000 AND BEYOND).....	273
MESKHETIAN REPATRIATION PROBLEM AND THREAT PERCEPTION IN GEORGIAN SOCIETY .....	277
THE KOSOVO CONFLICT: THE BALKANS AND THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS .....	280
ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICT, INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT, AND HUMAN RIGHTS.....	300
WHAT FREEZES AND WHAT UNFREEZES CONFLICTS? (THE CASE OF THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ DISPUTE).....	319
UNDERSTANDING FRAGMENTED COMMUNITIES (A PERCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE GEORGIAN REALITY).....	325
IDP HAS THE CHOICE: TO RETURN HOME OR STAY HERE International Center on Conflict a Negotiation Demands to reform the UN .....	336
SAAKASHVILI’S STRATEGIC MISSTEP WHY DID NOT THE REVOLUTION TAKE PLACE IN GEORGIA? .....	341
REAL SPOILERS IN A WOULD-BE PEACE PROCESS (THE SOUTH-CAUCASUS CASE) .....	347
STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN AJARA.....	349
“FROZEN CONFLICT” AS A RESULT OF AN UNCOORDINATED COLLABORATIVE ACTION .....	351
THE WAY FORWARD: PRACTICAL MEASURES .....	360
THE IMPACT OF “ROSE REVOLUTION” IN GEORGIA ON FROZEN CONFLICTS AND THE PROSPECTS OF EURO-INTEGRATION FOR THE SOUTH CAUCASUS .....	365
IDENTITY QUEST, NATIONAL MYTHS AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES: GEORGIA IN THE SOUTH-CAUCASUS CONTEXT.....	370
PRESENTATION FOR GPPAC MEMBERS: SOUTH CAUCASUS .....	388

THE ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA CASES: SPOILERS IN A NEARLY COLLAPSED PEACE PROCESS .....	401
COMMEMORATING THE IMMORTAL TEACHING .....	425
PEOPLE FEEL UNEASY .....	427
UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS IN GEORGIA: DEADLOCKS, OXYMORONS AND STRATEGIES.....	429
THE ONLY WAY FOR GEORGIA IS TO BE A RELIABLE AND STABLE STATE .....	438
A RESOLUTION TO THE CAUCASUS WAR? .....	443
DOUBLE STANDARDS FOR KOSOVO .....	446
RUSSIA CONTINUES TO “PUNISH” GEORGIA, GEORGIA’S ALLIES ARE TRYING TO HELP, THE WORLD CONTINUES TO WATCH .....	453
PROPORTIONS OF DISPROPORTION AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (THE STATES OBLIGATIONS AND THE AUGUST 2008 RUSSIA-GEORGIA CONFRONTATION).....	457
AN ACADEMIC APPROACH TO THE CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS.....	462
GEORGIA’S DEGENERATIVE TRANSITION .....	473
SYNTHESIS PAPER ON THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH WORK OF THE GEORGIAN GROUP .....	482
CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA-GEORGIA RELATIONS	
THE ORWELLIAN POWER PHENOMENON IN 21ST CENTURY.....	502
GEORGIA’S SECURITY DILEMMA IN THE LIGHT OF POST-AUGUST REALITIES .....	520
GEORGIA’S TRANSITION DILEMMA.....	533
THE POTENTIAL OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE POST-WAR ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF GEORGIAN-OSSETIAN CONFLICT .....	541
ENGAGEMENT WITHOUT RECOGNITION OR RECOGNITION WITHOUT ENGAGEMENT? .....	543
STIMULI AND OBSTACLES TO DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS .....	546
UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: THE PROCESS, THE PROSPECT, AND THE “ENGAGEMENT” WITHOUT ENGAGEMENT .....	549
FOR A STUCK SCREENSAVER DEMOCRACY IN GEORGIA, THE ELECTION YEAR MAY WORK AS A RESET KEY .....	557
MISUNDERSTANDING THAT GEORGIA WILL NOT FACILITATE A SOLUTION.....	560
VIRTUAL UNIVERSE KEEPS TURNING INTO A DYNAMO.....	565
WILL THERE BE CIVIL CONFRONTATION? .....	568
INTELLECTUAL DILEMMA OR POLITICAL HOAX? .....	570
THE RECIPROCAL IMPACT OF UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS ON THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRACY BUILDING – GEORGIA IN THE REGIONAL CONTEXT .....	572

THE ISTANBUL PROCESS: A DIALOGUE OF GEORGIAN AND RUSSIAN POLITICAL EXPERTS .....	590
ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH-OSSETIA DIVIDES IN THE LIGHT OF GEORGIA-RUSSIA DIALOGUE: TRIANGULATION INSTEAD OF A FAILED TETRAGON?.....	599
GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI'S BIOGRAPHY .....	617
LIST OF SOURCES.....	630
INDEX.....	635

## A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

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The Book IV “George Khutsishvili: How to Resolve Conflicts” presents a selection of analytical articles and newspaper interviews by Doctor of Philosophy, Professor George Khutsishvili (1948-2013), Founding Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN).

The selected work is published in the Book IV posthumously, materials of which were written during 1994-2013 years respectively. The book includes analytical articles and newspaper interviews compiled chronologically reflecting ethnic, religious and political conflict resolution and peacebuilding approaches of the author.

The Book IV comprises the original English language material including some unpublished commentaries from his personal archive.

As for George Khutsishvili’s original Georgian and Russian language articles, written in the same year span, they are published in separate volumes of Book I and II (Georgian) and Book III (Russian) in 2016. All four volumes of the publication originally written by George Khutsishvili in Georgian, English and Russian languages empower the reader to acknowledge his work in full perspective.

The work offers its readers an interesting insight into the issue such as scientist - state relations, both declaring a desire to settle conflicts. The author offers peacebuilding concepts and nonviolent ways of conflict resolution as a basic principle of democratic development mainly of South Caucasus, Georgia in particular.

The demonstrated notions of the work derive from the author's peaceful mindset and nonviolent way of life.

The following publication is intended for researchers in the field of peace and conflict studies, as well as a broader spectrum of readers.

Thank you for the commemoration of George Khutsishvili.

I want to express my gratitude to Ambassador Dieter Boden, Dr. Johan Galtung and Ambassador John McDonald, who have sent warm words of George's remembrance to us. I thank the Reader, every colleague, interviewer journalist, student and, altogether, each person who had a professional and friendly relationship with George.

Many thanks to the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), its team, each person who helped me to create and publish this book and contributed to this work.

Special thanks to Victoria-Sophia Khutsishvili who helped me and made my work easier.

Lastly, thank you, George

**Nina Tsikhistavi-Khutsishvili**

8<sup>th</sup> of April, 2018

Tbilisi, Georgia



**By Dr. Dieter Boden, Ambassador, (ret.)**

### **GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI**

I first met George Khutsishvili in Tbilisi in the mid 1990ies when he was just back from Stanford University and I had arrived to take up my new job as Head of the local OSCE Mission. At Stanford, George had been pretty busy with studies that focussed on issues of ethno-territorial conflicts on former Soviet territory. George immediately took a lively interest in my work on the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. We used to see a lot of each other at conferences, informal discussion rounds, but also during monitoring excursions to the cease-fire-line around Tskhinvali.

It is with delight that I remember an OSCE media conference in Kobuleti in spring 1996 which both of us attended. We went back to Tbilisi in the same car, and this offered a most welcome opportunity to talk extensively to each other. He drew my attention to the growing role the civil society had begun to play in his country which was then under Shevardnadze's firm rule. This civil society articulated itself mostly through the NGO community, of which he had become an active member. On our way he proposed to show me the Gelati monastery to which I gladly agreed. I learnt that George was not only an excellent expert of Georgia's history and culture, but that he also had a remarkable ability to convey this knowledge to others.



When I came back to Georgia in late 1999 as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and Head of UNOMIG we renewed and deepened our relationship. Meanwhile, the importance of NGO's for Georgia's democratic transformation process had increased, and this was particularly relevant for George's foundation, the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN). ICCN's particular field of interest was conflict settlement, and this was the point where our interests met perfectly. It was then that our dialog on how to work out new concepts for a NGO-driven dialog between Abkhaz and Georgians started. I tried to be helpful in his endeavours to intensify contacts with representatives of the Abkhaz NGO's. In the memorable meeting between NGO's from Abkhazia and Georgia which UNOMIG managed to arrange in Tbilisi in September 2000 George was one of the most active participants.

I departed from my second mission to Georgia in June 2002, but came back since then in a variety of official or semi-official roles. This gave me ample opportunity to continue the cooperation with George which had meanwhile developed into a relation of friendship and deep mutual appreciation. His expertise was of particular value to me during my activities as Head of the OSCE Observation Mission for the Presidential Elections of January 2008. We shared the view that these elections were flawed because they violated a number of key rules generally recognized as valid for their democratic conduct.

There was one further highlight of our cooperation which was the Conference on Conflict in post-Soviet Europe, in particular the South Caucasus, organised by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin in October 2009. The August war of 2008 in Georgia and its consequences were a major topic of debate, and George's presentation to the conference gave a brilliant analytical introduction into this matter. What he said concerning the origins of the two internal conflicts in Georgia struck a new note. It was largely due to nationalistic policies under Georgia's presidents Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili, he explained, and to their lack of willingness to adopt a forward-looking policy of reconciliation and trust-building that these conflicts continued to exist as basically deadlocked issues. This diagnosis was vigorously rejected by many in those days; meanwhile it has been accepted as close to reality.

I am grateful for the chance I have had to cooperate with George during many years in one common effort. It was a truly complementary effort between diplomacy on one side and civil society on the other on a theme which is and remains of key importance for Georgia: how to initiate a meaningful conflict settlement process which leads into the future without ignoring the bitter lessons of the past. Like few others George knew how to raise public awareness on this matter, like few others he has presented fresh analysis, for example on the 2003 Rose Revolution and the August 2008 war and their impact on conflict settlement strategies. He really had the visionary power to open up new ways of thinking.

And he was aware of the fact that a broad approach was needed, one that should include an involvement of Russia. To this effect, just a few months before his sudden death, he started a project aimed at restoring a process for the resumption of a Russian-Georgian dialog. Its first stage was supposed to be a meeting in Moscow among independent high-profile experts from both sides. This project now stands out as one of his legacies.

When I learned about George's unexpected passing away I was struck with consternation and sadness. It is a sadness which I feel even nowadays when I come back to Tbilisi to meet with colleagues and friends. What is left is his work which will assure him a place of honour among those who have engaged themselves for a functioning civil society after Georgia became independent. Still, I miss a friend who was dear to me for all the unique human and professional qualities which he had.

Dr. Dieter Boden, Ambassador, (ret.).<sup>1</sup>

27/12/2014

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<sup>1</sup> German diplomat who headed the OSCE/ODIHR Mission to observe the presidential elections in Georgia in 2008. As an Ambassador he headed the German OSCE Representation in Vienna from 2002 to 2005. From 1999-2002, he acted as the UN Secretary General's Special Representative in Georgia. In 1995 he became Head of the OSCE Mission in Georgia and, from 1999 to 2002, went back to the Caucasus as UN Special Representative to the Secretary General in Georgia and Head of UNOMIG. Dr. Boden is now an Adjunct Professor of International Relations at the University of Potsdam. He holds a Ph.D. in Slavic Philology from Hamburg University.





**By Dr. Johan Galtung**

## **GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI**

The news about his premature passing away came as a great shock to me. He was such a wonderful person and so dedicated in his struggle for peace, in Georgia, in Caucasus, in the world, with his International Center of Conflict and Negotiation, ICCN.

The context for his work, Georgia, is a very problematic one. An ancient culture with the Georgian language housing one of the first Christianities, the Georgian one, with enclaves – Abkhazia, Ossetia – that are talking Russian. Stalin, a very famous Georgian, is partly responsible for that, whether it was to compensate for lack of independence in the Soviet Union or not... He as a ruthless dictator thinking that his Soviet empire was cut out for eternity would be on top and in any case the Red Army would take care of serious problems.

But eternity proved to be of short duration, the empire evaporated, the Red Army took on all colors as national armies, and wars broke out. The violence in Georgia was horrible. Veteran organizations had good reasons to reject the violence and search for new approaches. And George, with his great intellect, knowledge and personal charisma inserted himself in all of this, this mess to put it mildly, dedicating his life to Georgian-Abkhazian, Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Russian negotiations.

Sustainable solutions have not yet been found, and the 2008 war was a setback. But we may have arrived at a post-violence situation that could open for a more positive peace. If so, George has certainly played a major role. It is deeply tragic for Georgia, Caucasus and beyond that he is not with us to inspire more progress. But his spirit is – and will never die.

Thank you, George.

Johan Galtung<sup>1</sup>

15 July, 2014

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<sup>1</sup> Johan Galtung, a professor of peace studies, was born in 1930 in Oslo, Norway. He is a mathematician, sociologist, political scientist and the founder of the discipline of peace studies. He founded the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (1959), the world's first academic research center focused on peace studies, as well as the influential *Journal of Peace Research* (1964). He has helped found dozens of other peace centers around the world. He is currently the president of the Galtung-Institut for Peace Theory & Peace Practice. He has served as a professor for peace studies at universities all over the world, including Columbia (New York), Oslo, Berlin, Belgrade, Paris, Santiago de Chile, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Sichuan, Ritsumeikan (Japan), Princeton, Hawaii, Tromsø, Bern, Alicante (Spain) and dozens of others on all continents. He has taught thousands of individuals and motivated them to dedicate their lives to the promotion of peace and the satisfaction of basic human needs. He has mediated in over 150 conflicts between states, nations, religions, civilizations, communities, and persons since 1957. His contributions to peace theory and practice include conceptualization of peace-building, conflict mediation, reconciliation, non-violence, theory of structural violence, theorizing about negative vs positive peace, peace education and peace journalism.



**By Dr. John W. McDonald, Ambassador, (ret.)**

## **GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI WAS A HERO FOR ME**

I first met him in 2001 when I made my first trip to Tbilisi, Georgia, and I gave several lectures at his International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, and was deeply impressed by the dedication of his students.

I'm a lawyer by education and training, and was a U.S. Diplomat for 40 years. I retired in 1987, became a law professor at George Washington University in Washington D.C. teaching International Negotiations. From 1988 to 1992, I was the first president of the Iowa Peace Institute located in Grinnell, Iowa, home of Grinnell College.

In 1992, I returned to Washington, and co-founded my Institute For Multi-Track Diplomacy as a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization focusing on a Systems Approach to peace.

In 2005, I was invited to come to the first ever meeting of non-governmental organizations around the world, held in the Great General Assembly Hall of the United Nations in New York City. After I sat down in my seat, someone tapped me on the shoulder in the row behind me, and I turned around, and there was my old friend George with several of his old friends and colleagues from Georgia attending the same meeting. We got up and hugged each other, and expressed our mutual delight in getting together again.

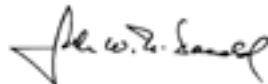
In late September and early October of 2013, my wife Christel and I were invited to Tbilisi and spent some 10 days in Georgia. We established our own NGO in Tbilisi during that visit.

I will never forget the fact that George opened and moderated a session with some 50 students in Tbilisi who would come together to hear me speak about IMTD and our Systems Approach to peace. George was a great moderator, and everybody in the room loved him for who he was.

George's unexpected departure was a shock to his friends, and students, across the world. There was nobody quite like George. In my long experience in the field, I can truly say he was a unique human being, and is already missed by the world.

John W. McDonald<sup>1</sup>, U.S. Ambassador, ret.  
Chairman & CEO Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy

March 2014

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. McDonald". The signature is stylized and cursive.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ambassador John W. McDonald is a Professor of law, diplomat, former international civil servant, development expert and peacebuilder, concerned about world social, economic and ethnic problems. He spent twenty years of his diplomatic career in Western Europe and the Middle East and worked for sixteen years on United Nations economic and social affairs. He is currently Chairman and co-founder (1992) of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, in Washington D.C., which focuses on national and international ethnic conflicts, including the Millennium goals of clean drinking water and sanitation. He also is UNEP's North American Representative to the International Environmental Governance Advisory Group. McDonald retired from the U.S.A. Foreign Service in 1987, after a 40 year diplomatic career.

*“THE COMMON POINT IN ALL MAJOR CRISES IS  
THAT YOU CANNOT OVERCOME THEM WITHOUT  
TRANSFORMING YOUR MIND”*

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.







## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

BY GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI

I grew up in the Soviet Union, although in the part of it where ideology was not entirely a dominating factor of peoples' lives, and where you had a lucky chance, or lucky illusion to look at things as if from the outside while being at the same time part of them, a curious dual effect that later played a joke on my people – the Georgians. At least, I can say to their credit that most Georgians never identified completely with the world view imposed by the Soviet ideology and propaganda, and the demand of an external evaluation of everything that was going on inside the society was always a crucial point in their understanding. Knowing and seeing that, the Soviet rulers tried, and successfully, to affect people's unconscious in order to convert them, along with clumsy direct influences.

The Communist system was based on a metaphysical philosophy, and the brainwashed masses of people were so used to assess things in terms of Soviet-styled "good" and "evil" they still cannot

overcome this habit in the times of complete reassessment or collapse of old values.

Praising themselves for having preserved their religion through all historic calamities, invasions, and foreign domination periods, they started to forget the truth discovered long before capitalism that “you can gain the whole world, and lose your own soul”.

Well before civil wars, ethnic violence, and (auto)genocide became part of the recent post-Soviet experience, I remember how I experienced a shock when during one public lecture the lecturer touched a topic of how a natural ecosystem regulates itself in times of crisis (meaning why a society fails to do the same), and a known scholar among the audience remarked loudly he was saying bullshit. The lecturer preferred not to indulge in polemics but he looked upset and his talk became less self-confident from that point, and after the lecture I was thinking how preoccupied people may be about recording the “obviousness” of others’ faults and how careless they are about not hurting others’ feelings.

... Ignorance ... origin of life on to the game of mass paranoia (re Berne, mimetic rivalry, and political psych) development showed that educated people are the people who need most to be reeducated.

# Ethnicity, Federalism and Democratic Transition in Russia

# 1994

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, Center for Conflict Resolution, Tbilisi, Georgia, and Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Security and Arms Control, Stanford University. A Conference Report, November 11-17, 1993, The Berkeley-Stanford Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies University of California at Berkeley and The Center for International Security and Arms Control Center for Russian and East European Studies, Stanford University, 1994.

## ETHNICITY, FEDERALISM AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN RUSSIA

Creating a workable federation from ethnically-defined republics has been a messy business not only in Russia but in neighboring Georgia and the other Soviet successor states as well. By my count, almost two-thirds of the ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union have turned violent. In the Caucasus region alone there are almost one and a half million refugees. Georgia, which like Russia consists of several autonomous republics, is very instructive about the roots of violent ethnic confrontation and the difficulties of creating effective policies to resolve these conflicts.

The nature of Soviet federalism can in many ways be blamed for the ethnic conflicts in Georgia. This is particularly evident in the autonomous republic of Abkhazia. The Soviet state designated the Abkhaz as the titular nationality within the republic. The Abkhaz, however, made up only seventeen percent of the republic's population. As a result, the Georgian government mistakenly thought it could deal with the ethnic problem by simply guaranteeing the republic autonomy within Georgia. But the Abkhaz leadership,

representing less than a fifth of the republic, feared open elections, and so rejected this solution.

Inspired by the claims of the USSR's fifteen other republics, Abkhaz leaders began calling for secession from Georgia late in the Gorbachev Era. But the Georgian government, unable to ignore the large number of Georgians in Abkhazia, could not permit independence. The conflict quickly heightened and turned into civil war. This situation alone has created over 250,000 refugees.

I do not believe, however, that the Abkhaz conflict resulted from ethnic discrimination by the Georgian government. Jews, Armenians, Russians and other national minorities all live peacefully in the country. In fact, at one point a movement was created to foster a civic Georgian identity. This movement promoted allegiance not to the Georgian nationality but to the territorially-defined state. Unfortunately, the Abkhaz situation has heightened ethnic conflict among all groups in Georgia, thereby destroying the movement's hopes.

The Abkhaz conflict represents an example of how elites can manipulate and foster ethnic conflict. Members of the Russian military, certain Russian parliamentarians and some Russian intellectuals have tried to promote Abkhaz separatist claims to disrupt the Georgian state, wrongly portraying the Abkhaz as "national liberators".

While it is easy to identify the roots of the conflict in places like Abkhazia, it is much more difficult to identify how best to resolve the conflict. Galina Starovoitova gave a fascinating and insightful analysis of how best to approach the issue of ethnic separatism. But I do not agree that history can ever be used as a basis for deciding national disagreements. History has been repeatedly called upon in the ethnic conflict in Georgia by all sides. But history can be interpreted in infinite ways and is easily manipulated by elites. The actual situation in the present is a much better criteria for resolving debates over separatism.

The conflict in Abkhazia demonstrates the dangers of creating a federation on ethnic principles. Such a federation may promote ethnic identity and needlessly create the seeds of separatism. A federation with such tensions seems unlikely to last.



The Galvez House Monitor, Newsletter of the Center for International Security and Arms Control, Stanford University, Winter, 1994.

## FELLOWSHIP BRINGS UNIQUE GEORGIAN PERSPECTIVE TO STANFORD

The roster of Center fellows often looks like a panorama of the countries on the globe. For the first time, CISAC is hosting a fellow from the Republic of Georgia. He is George Khutsishvili, director of the Centre for Conflict Research in Tbilisi.

Khutsishvili founded the Georgian center in Spring of 1992, when Eduard Shevardnadze returned to Georgia as provisional head of state. The chartered purpose of the forum, unique to Georgia, is to “create a basis for research on, education in, and early prevention of ethnic and social conflict”. The center has worked closely with CSCE and UN mediation efforts in the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia, which rebelled against the Tbilisi government.

At Tbilisi State University, Khutsishvili completed two doctoral dissertations, one on the foundations of mathematics and the other on the genesis of the structure of theoretical thinking, which resulted in the prestigious degree of Doctor of Philosophical Sciences. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, he was ready

to pursue non-Marxist political science, and shifted his focus to practical applications, especially conflict theory.

Last year Khutsishvili won one of the sought-after fellowship spots in the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) competition, funded largely by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. An individual donor has provided extra funding to allow Khutsishvili to extend his visit at Stanford.

The gravity of the ongoing conflict in his native country weighs heavily on him, but he still sees reason to be optimistic. “There is a tragic feeling on the part of society about the positive turn in the Russian-Georgian relationship”, he says. “For many it is seen as the end of Georgian independence, but actually it is only the end of a long – held illusion of independence. Georgia needs the help of both Russia and Western countries – and clever management, which hopefully Shevardnadze can provide, will ensure Georgia’s true independence. I truly believe that as the globe becomes more interconnected, smaller countries will have more opportunity to become strong”.

Georgia’s ethnic diversity – “a host of different cultures for centuries” – is both a curse and a blessing, according to Khutsishvili. On one hand the people are more liberal and enjoy *a joie de vivre* unique to the continent. On the other, the atmosphere is ripe for opportunistic nationalist movements. People have been afraid of losing their basic rights, says Khutsishvili, and that fear has been readily manipulated by those who wish to impose their own domination. Georgia represents a tragic example of “how an inexperienced and naive society can complicate its own way to freedom. Now there is total distrust of the political system. Although people can endure the most dire of economic deprivations, they will not, I hope, tolerate wrong-headed nationalism”. He says this is true throughout the former Soviet republics, although the prognosis is different in each case. Zhirinovskiy’s strong showing in Russian parliamentary elections shows that throughout the FSU there is more than simply public frustration – rather there is very fertile soil for great power chauvinism.



Khutsishvili's enthusiasm for working at CISAC is high: "Here we can see the world from different perspectives, access important and unique sources – both academic and policy – and be involved in the activities of one of the world's advanced research centers. I hope to use what I have learned in raising the political culture in Georgia and helping to solve the disputes that still exist".



geostrategic game for domination in – and recently even beyond – the post-Soviet space is becoming clear. The Transcaucasus region of the former Soviet Union, comprising the three republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, has attracted particular attention in this respect.

### **MOSCOW'S VIEWS DISSEMINATED**

Less known is the fact that conventional views of the conflicts in the Caucasus (i.e., secessionist wars in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Azeri-Armenian war over Nagorno-Karabakh, the situation in the breakaway Chechnya Republic, and ethnic clashes between the Ingush and North Ossetian autonomies in the south of Russia) mainly have been created and disseminated globally by Russian television, which constitutes a unique, ubiquitous and dominating force in the post-Soviet information space.<sup>1</sup> For many years the Caucasus region had been perceived by the external world as virtually indistinguishable from Russia. Even the Western news reporters on the spot, let alone foreign policy analysts, with no knowledge of the local languages and very little background information, were largely influenced and conditioned by what they saw on television programs from Moscow. They were scarcely capable of imagining the degree of subjectivity both in supposedly factual live reports and in commentary.

The Republic of Georgia, a tiny spot on the post-Soviet political map, came to attract international attention largely because of two circumstances, i.e., almost permanent turmoil since the disintegration of the Soviet Union (following a year of bizarre ethno-nationalist rule by former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia),<sup>2</sup> and the leadership of Eduard Shevardnadze, former Soviet Foreign Minister

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<sup>1</sup> Remarkably, while cutting energy and fuel supplies to Belarus', Ukraine and other debtor republics, the Russian government has repeatedly shown a readiness to forgive arrears of payment for relaying the Russian TV channels.

<sup>2</sup> An accurate account of this period can be found in Stephen F. Jones, "Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition", in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds.). *Nation and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

and principal confederate of Mikhail Gorbachev. Now Georgia seems likely to be viewed as a model of a failed state.

### RENEWED RUSSIAN MILITARY PRESENCE

In Soviet times, Georgia was best known for its excellent theater, cinema and fine arts. The Georgians' devotion to the arts apparently had sublimated the negative forces that had accumulated during almost two centuries of imperial Russian domination. However, since the decline of the Soviet empire, Georgians have been so committed to displaying melodramatic apprehension and antagonism in their relationships with the Russians<sup>1</sup> that Georgia became a victim of self-fulfilling prophecy. Russia increased its covert support for rebel and separatist minority groups until it was able to reestablish its military presence and implement a political dictate involving the virtual decomposition of the Caucasian republic.

Shevardnadze had remarked repeatedly that the destiny of Georgia was being decided in Abkhazia, and he was right in his view. This ancient and fertile land has for centuries been settled by various ethnic groups, among which the Abkhazians and Georgians are both indigenous.<sup>2</sup> Beneath the traditionally tolerant relations between the two peoples (attested by many mixed marriages) glimmered sparks that in a few years blazed up into an incredible degree of anti-Georgian hatred comparable to the ethnic antagonisms in Bosnia. The nationalist "Georgia for the Georgians" hysteria launched by

1994

<sup>1</sup> The sessions of the Georgian parliament and the press controlled by the political parties had exploited a mythic picture of Russia as Georgia's only eternal and formidable enemy, which tightened its grip every time that Georgia gathered forces for a breakthrough to independence. Remarkably, the answer to this was found not in wise policies, but rather in self-sacrificial actions capable of impressing the decision-making and aid-providing West: "We prefer to die than to live in slavery". The people, though, were not properly asked about what they would prefer: there was a successful referendum for independence, but there could not be a referendum for collective suicide.

<sup>2</sup> According to the 1989 census, out of Abkhazia's total population of 524,000, fewer than 91,000 — 17 percent — were ethnic Abkhazians, 46 percent being Georgians (prior to the recent "ethnic cleansing" that expelled most Georgians), 15 percent being Armenians, 14 percent Russians, and 8 percent others (Vol. ed. Keith Armes).

the Zviadists (followers of Gamsakhurdia) played a decisive role in bringing about this process.

The Russians have concentrated on backing the procommunist Abkhaz secessionist leadership of this breakaway Georgian region (with its long stretch of Black Sea shoreline), not least in view of Russia's complicated relationship with Ukraine (which threatens to reduce Russia's control of the Black Sea).<sup>1</sup>

A clumsy attempt by Georgian Government troops on August 14-15, 1992, to restore order in the Abkhaz capital Sukhumi gave rise to a bloody year-long war that resulted in over 200,000 refugees and forcibly displaced persons (mainly ethnic Georgians). The secessionist Abkhaz stronghold of Gudauta remained "miraculously" free of the shortages, anarchy and famine that had spread all over Georgia.<sup>2</sup> The government repeatedly appealed to the UN, CSCE, and other international organizations to intervene, while at the same time refusing offers of Russian military assistance. Several UN Security Council resolutions and decisions failed to lead to a de-escalation of the conflict. On July 27, 1993, a Russian-brokered trilateral agreement on a ceasefire and principles for the solution of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict was signed. Complete demilitarization of the region, supervised by Russia, was to follow the separation of the military forces of the two sides. However, the UN failed to implement its long-sought decision to send a large group of military observers to Abkhazia. Furthermore, the Russian military observers insisted that Georgians did not participate in the supervision of the withdrawal of heavy weapons.

### **RUSSIAN ARMS FOR ABKHAZIA**

At the end of August 1993, S. Shoygu, chairman of the Russian Emergency State Committee, declared on Russian television that

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<sup>1</sup> See Misha Glenny, "The Bear in the Caucasus: From Georgian Chaos, Russian Order", *Harper's Magazine*, March 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Russian support for the Abkhaz secessionists is well illustrated in Sergei Mostovshchikov's article "State of Wax", *Izvestia*, July 27-28, 1993.

demilitarization had reached a stage at which resumption of the war would be impossible. Large numbers of hopeful refugees returned to their ruined homes and began rebuilding. Then on September 17, a surprise attack by Abkhaz tanks and artillery, supported by their Russian North Caucasian and Cossack allies, forced the remaining disarmed Georgian troops, together with tens of thousands of civilians, to flee in panic. Many of these victims later starved or froze to death in the Svaneti Mountains. Shevardnadze himself, who was besieged along with the defenders of Sukhumi, had a narrow escape. The sudden clandestine Abkhaz rearmament remains a mystery only for the extremely naive.<sup>1</sup>

The war ended in late September 1993 with Abkhazia's virtual secession from Georgia through a radical ethnic cleansing of its multi-ethnic population and the destruction of its cities, including Sukhumi. After this, facing a new insurgency in Western Georgia led by deposed president Gamsakhurdia (who was trying to profit from the desperate situation in the country) Shevardnadze was obliged to trade Georgia's independence (by joining the Russian-controlled CIS) for Russian military assistance. Included in Russia's price was the establishment of three Russian military bases on Georgian territory.

### **MOSCOW MANIPULATES N-K CONFLICT**

Self-sustainability and outside manipulation have been the features of the oldest (since 1989) and bloodiest (over 15,000 casualties and almost 1.5 million refugees) ethno-political conflict over the ethnically Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh region in Azerbaijan. The futility of international efforts to deal with the conflict has been evident in this case also.<sup>2</sup> Azerbaijan's pro-Turkish president Abulfaz Elchibey was deposed in a military coup in June 1993, a couple of days before he was due to sign a major treaty opening the door

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<sup>1</sup> Fewer than 91,000 Abkhaz secessionists suddenly had a modern airforce, including Russian SU-25 attack planes that bombed the port of Sukhumi while it was still held by Georgian forces (Vol. ed. Keith Armes).

<sup>2</sup> In 1992-93 alone there were 10 failed international initiatives over Nagorno-Karabakh (see *Moscow News*, No. 23, 1993).

for Western investors to Azerbaijan's large oil deposits. Elchibey was replaced by Heydar Aliyev, the former communist ruler of Azerbaijan, who immediately suspended the Western investments and signed a treaty with Russia instead.

The natural question arises why the Russian Federation should be interested in manipulating and aggravating ethnic conflicts in neighboring newly independent republics in view of the contagious character of such conflicts and the instability already existing in what is still the largest country in the world. In order to respond to this question, one needs to distinguish between the forces that formally define and those that actually determine Russian strategies. It is not necessary to assume a single rational actor behind the whole complex picture. Rather, one may assume that a statistically sufficient synergy between the Russian military, the security apparatus, the legislature and voter sentiment "hath done this deed".

Could the process whereby former Soviet republics tried to obtain independence have been more successful politically and less disastrous in its consequences for their populations? As it turned out, ethnic nationalism was the only force on the political palette, both in the Baltic region and the Caucasus — the foremost regions in terms of the desire to be free of Soviet rule — that animated the politically active sections of society. (The Baltic nations, however, were fortunate enough to enjoy the support of the West). Soviet totalitarian rule was unable to produce anything but its own disguised and distorted reflections in the social consciousness of the various peoples. Democratically minded movements and parties lacked the fervor and ruthlessness to satisfy mass expectations. The revival of democratic organizations is essential for the future of the Caucasus — if there is to be any acceptable future for this tormented part of the globe.

## DEMOCRACY OR NATIONAL-SOZIALISMUS?

### (RUSSIA'S CHOICE AND THE POST-SOVIET PROSPECT)

GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI

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## DEMOCRACY OR NATIONAL-SOZIALISMUS? (Russia's choice and the post-Soviet prospect)

We live in a post-cold-war world that has shifted to a new and as yet unexplored system of gears. Among the visible effects of this shift is the rising role of ethnic nationalism<sup>1</sup> and ethnic violence, which has taken the most intolerable and challenging form in Bosnia. One immediate way of interpreting this process, as political analysts have already done, is to use a functionalist approach. This interpretation describes the process either as a painful search for new identities or a revival of old, forgotten ones amidst the fragmenting reality caused by the fall of empires.

A less obvious yet plausible interpretation may be based on a realist approach to ethnonationalism as a rising and basically

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<sup>1</sup> Liah Greenfield in her widely discussed book *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992) sees nationalism as a decisive force in human history, largely disregarding at the same time ethnic nationalism and considering select case studies of England, France, Russia, Germany, and America only up to mid-nineteenth century.



destructive force capitalizing on a global need for structural and cultural transformation in human society.

The West's basic answer to the global challenge of ethnic nationalism has been the idea of multiculturalism. Among the countries that will face a powerful cultural transformation in the coming decades is the United States.<sup>1</sup> Its multicultural solution to the problem of a global village seems to be contested by a growing number of nations seeking the opposite solution via ultranationalism, secessionism, and ethnic cleansing.

## **TWO APPROACHES TO MULTICULTURALISM**

The United States of America and the Soviet Union represented in fact two attempts to build, though from entirely different perspectives and on mutually inconsistent bases, multicultural supersocieties in which the ethnic ego would be transcended in a totally new type of transethnic community of people(s). In the former, this has largely been a spontaneous process that has been realized by limited sections of society until it recently became visible for all. In the latter, it had been a constituent part of the state ideology, based on the Marx-Lenin-Stalinist doctrine of the origin and destiny of the nation and the state. The Soviet culture was at the same time a goal and a transforming tool for that transition.

On the other hand, both societies were similar in their intellectual belief that the ethnic factor in social/political development was dying off and, thus, negligible. It seemed natural, therefore, for both political poles represented by the two world superpowers to neglect altogether ethnicity as a factor shaping the intercultural/cross-cultural dimensions of international relations. Accordingly, research highlighting or stressing the ethnonational factor in world politics had mostly been underrated or overlooked by both superpowers. At the same time, new ethnic doctrines, opposing and contesting the

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<sup>1</sup> Time magazine devoted a fall 1993 special issue to interethnic synergy in shaping "the new face of America" as the world's first multi-cultural society (the computer-synthesized image of this face was included).

idea of multiculturalism, had been developing within the powerful ethnonationalist movements emerging in the collapsing empires.

Now that one of the systems has ceased (at least geopolitically) to exist and the idea of a transethnic multiculturalism is represented solely by the United States, the rising nationalist doctrines will most probably start (or continue) to acquire a growing anti-American character.

### **ETHNICITY, THE STATE, AND SELF-DETERMINATION**

The Soviet Union displayed a kaleidoscope of cultures, traditions and lifestyles of the nations that were interwoven by the founding fathers into an “unbreakable Union”.<sup>1</sup> Basic to the state arrangement, and structurally looking very much like a *Matrioshka* (Russian doll), was a complex hierarchy of ethnically defined administrative-territorial units manageable from the Kremlin. Every component in this hierarchy that might confront the center (e.g., by trying to secede) in an instance of the center’s decentralization/destabilization would, in its turn, be confronted and finally neutralized by the lower components. The center was bound to be reinforced through such affirming double-negative action.

As soon as Gorbachev liberalized the regime in the late 1980s to the extent that the constitution might be taken seriously, nationalist movements, first in Lithuania followed by the other Baltic republics and then in Georgia and later in Moldova and Azerbaijan, tried to take advantage of the situation to achieve legally and peacefully a “divorce” from the center. Almost immediately, ethnic minorities, led mostly by the Communists, reacted exactly according to the implanted *Matrioshka* principle. This took place in the subrepublican regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, Trans-Dniester and Gagauzia in Moldova, and Russian-populated areas in the Baltics.

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<sup>1</sup> “The unbreakable union of the free republics” sang the Soviet National Anthem, representing another case of a contradiction in terms.

Objectively speaking, most of those minorities had serious reasons to fear the growing ethnic extremism of the new leaders in the seceding republics. Subjectively, this fear was manipulated and the feeling of insecurity aggravated by the minority leaders and elite groups to their political advantage. The degree of tension and confrontation was increased by the fact that the national liberation movements in the republics were outspokenly and demonstratively anti-Soviet and anti-Communist, while the minority movements, appealing directly to Russia's, protection and support, acted under pro-Soviet and pro-Communist slogans.

One of the major arguments between the republican and sub-republican movements, was over different interpretations of the Soviet constitution (the subject may seem of minor importance now, but it appeared crucial then) regarding the right of secession, and the status and definition of a nation (see below). In a broader context, this argument has brought up the problem of compatibility of the two basic principles of international relations: inviolability of existing borders between states, and the right of self-determination of nations.

### **ETHNOI AND NATIONS**

Many of the seceding peoples of the Soviet Union objected to and protested the Western characterization of them as ethnic groups. The dispute about the limits of self-determination had been going on, not always on a peaceful note, within both the titular ethnic groups and the seceding minorities of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Ethnicity in their perception is a characteristic of lesser developed communities, like tribes. To be called ethnic is an insult for a fully developed nation (which each of them claimed to be) ready for independent statehood (although it might be argued that very few of the CIS nations showed signs of maturity after they had obtained independence).

In order to understand the sources of post-Soviet ethnic nationalism and chauvinism, we should first of all turn to the Soviet-

style modification of the idea of a nation. The “Leninist national policy” had been advertised by the Soviet ideologists as being among the top achievements of the October Socialist Revolution (now mostly referred to as the October 1917 Bolshevik coup). Reluctantly in Russia, and more enthusiastically in Georgia,<sup>1</sup> Joseph Stalin was named as the creator of the Marxist definition of a nation as a socioculturally and historically determined unity of people sharing the same territory, speaking the same language, participating in the same economic system, and displaying common psychological traits. A decisive feature of the Marxist doctrine distinguishing a nation from lesser types of communities was the unity of economic life specific for the capitalist stage of social development.<sup>2</sup>

1994

The Socialist society was understood not just as outgrowing but as altogether replacing a capitalist one; therefore, the nation, as a specific capitalist rudiment, was understood as a dying element of human society, along with its political organization (the state) and its political consciousness. In the beginning of the 1960s, Nikita Khrushchev’s ideologists first launched the idea of “the Soviet people” as a historically new supranational unity starting to replace the old conglomerate of ethnically divided peoples of the Soviet Union.

The spontaneous popular reaction to the internationalism of the Soviet ideology was different in Russia than in most of the Union Republics. Russians had categorically denied the existence of Russian nationalism (to the extent that they preferred not to refer to themselves as a nation); rationally speaking, they did not need it. Ordinary nationalist ambition had been replaced among Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> Since Khrushchev’s revelations that were made after Stalin’s death in 1953, the growing anti-Stalinist resentment in Russia had a definite ethnic tint to it. Russian populists tend to explain away their historical misfortune by referring to practically all Soviet rulers as being nonethnic Russians. The maiden name of Ulyanov-Lenin’s mother was (the Swedish) Blank, and his eyes were slanted; Stalin was Georgian or, by another version, Osset; Khrushchev was half Ukrainian; Brezhnev was Moldavian and had a non-Slavic appearance; and so forth, right down to Yeltsin’s being called (what else?) Jewish despite his having a definitely Russian habitus.

<sup>2</sup> Striking counter-examples to this definition, like the Jewish nation, were explained away by qualifying them as nationalities instead of nations.

Russians by assigning themselves an extraordinary mission of blazing the trail for all nations into the Socialist future. They perceived their country as a savior and shelter for the otherwise persecuted and doomed smaller nations who should be happy and grateful to enjoy a stable and peaceful development under the aegis of the “elder brother”. The contemporary political usage of the Russian language reflected this difference in self-perception/perception-of-others in applying the term *national republics* to denote the fourteen non-Russian Soviet republics but never to Soviet Russia itself.

Deliberate denationalization of Russia was a smart political step to reinforce a unitary Union, but it also produced a fair amount of bitterness and alienation among unprivileged ordinary Russians. That is why any demagogue-ultranationalist in the post-Soviet Russian political palette has a chance to benefit from the effects of a transition syndrome. Remarkably, one of the major reasons for the ill success and growing unpopularity of democratic movements in Russia is their neglect of the national factor. They started to realize their mistake when it was too late, and the label of being ethnically indifferent (next thing to “foreign imperialist agent”) already stuck to them. Probably, the most serious result, by its consequences for the world, of the fall of the Soviet Union will be the rise of Russian nationalism and the rebirth of Russia as a powerful nation-state.

Toward the end of the Soviet era, nationhood had turned into a major criteria of maturity for independence. And nationalism, cleared from all negative connotations, became a symbol of the struggle for independence.<sup>1</sup> It is appropriate to remember here that “the right of self-determination up to secession and creation of an independent state”, enshrined in the Soviet constitution (and which seemed harmless just because no way was envisaged for its implementation), was granted to *nations* only; hence, being recognized as a nation became extremely important because it

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to bear in mind that what the West meant by nationalism was more of the state-consciousness or statehood-affirming movement, while in the former U.S.S.R. it took the form of primarily ethnic nationalism (although in no case would it be called such a “humiliating” name).

opened up a way out of the disintegrating “unbreakable Union”. Legally speaking, what the Soviet constitution meant by nation was not all the nations in the Union but the fifteen Union Republics that had signed the Union treaty. It implicitly meant that they and only they had the official status of nations. How and why did this happen?

According to the principles laid out by Stalin at the ceremony of the adoption of the 1936 Soviet constitution, the status of a Union Republic could be given to the constituent nation that (i) had previous statehood for a historically considerable time, (ii) evinced ethnocultural and economic maturity, and (iii) had a common border with a foreign country (a sea coast wouldn’t count). Stalin ridiculed the attempts of some inner regions of Russia and of other republics to raise their status from an Autonomous to a Union Republic.

If one looks now at Tatarstan alone, totally surrounded by Russian territory and yet proclaiming (and actually moving toward) a virtual independence, one realizes how hypnotizingly convincing seemed the logic of the creators of the Soviet empire and how manipulative and inconclusive it really was.

### **ON THE ROOTS OF THE POST-SOVIET NATIONALISM**

It is impossible to explain the powerful rise of nationalist movements in the predisintegrated Union that have mostly shaped the post-Soviet reality outside Russia unless we accept that they had covertly and tacitly developed during the whole Soviet era. As soon as the people suddenly saw the collapsibility of the regime, the earlier conformist, neutral, and loyal majority in the national communities immediately took to the identity-enhancing nationalist philosophy and assumed their new role in the general process of the empire’s demolition.

But as soon as the growing isolationism of the new nationalist leaders in the republics had aggravated old and created new socioeconomic problems that caused hardships for the population, the same majority allowed the opposition to remove the much

revered and worshipped nationalist leaders in favor of the formerly hated Communist rulers; this has happened in a civilized form in Lithuania, in a more brutal form in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Practically speaking, the point is not how nationalistic post-Soviet societies really are but how demoralized and disintegrated they are and how unpredictably they may zigzag in their political likes and dislikes.

The seceding Soviet republics had profoundly different histories with respect to the issues of national self-realization and identity. The three Baltic nations were annexed to the Soviet Union just before World War II (along with the bordering Finnish territory) and, despite the most intensive Sovietization methods imposed on them, did not have sufficient time to Russify. The same goes for both Western Ukraine, which was given to Poland after World War I, and the major part of Moldova, which was retaken from Romania after World War II.

The Georgian situation was entirely different, and the cases of the other Caucasian nations, like Armenia or Azerbaijan, are no less remarkable, as all these nations were annexed to Russia early in the previous century. But the most amazing case is probably that of the Ukrainian anti-Russian nationalism. Despite the obvious similarity in language and culture (Kiev was historically the cradle of Russia) and over three centuries of unified existence under the “elder brother’s” governance (which would not normally suggest a strong feeling of identity in today’s Ukrainians), the “khokhols” (a Russian derogatory nickname for a Ukrainian) developed by the 1990s a distinctive sense of otherness from the “katsabs” (Ukrainian derogatory nickname for a Russian).<sup>1</sup>

When Georgia was part of the Russian Empire, from 1801 through 1917, after several centuries of Muslim domination, sticking

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<sup>1</sup> Remarkably, the old Ukrainian nickname for Russians was gradually ousted in the last decades by the Moskali (derogatory name for Muscovites), stressing the point of competitiveness between the two capitals in which Moscow was identified with the center of usurping and repressive power.

to Christianity was seen as the only way to survive as a nation. The Russian Revolution of February 1917 reopened the door to independence that was soon slammed shut by the Bolsheviks. As a part of the Soviet Union during the period 1921-1991, Georgians were known as a proud and independent-minded people who were extremely difficult to dominate or assimilate.

And yet, there were hardly any other non-Russians in the Union whose psychology was as much affected by the totalitarian system as Georgians. Like many other Sovietized nations of the old tradition, Georgians had developed the self-perception of *victims* of the generally inferior but dominating Russian force. Psychologically, this perception fostered the Georgian belief in Georgian nationalism as defensive, natural, and universally justifiable, even when it took assertive forms toward ethnic minorities within Georgia. This victim mentality is the only rational explanation for the fact that the extreme (to the extent of being grotesque) ultranationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia could get unprecedented support (and 87% of the votes) for the presidency of Georgia. The basically defective and mixed nationalist movement in Georgia later lost much of its popularity not because the nationalist ideas lost their attraction to people but because they proved to be unfeasible in view of the Russian strategic interest in this area.

It would be as unfair to attribute Gamsakhurdia's brief but impressive cult in Georgia to the anti-imperialist uprising of the long repressed national spirit, as it is dangerous to ascribe Zhirinovsky's success in Russia solely to the "mass frustration caused by deprivation and insecurity" (Boris Yeltsin's interpretation made immediately after the December 1993 elections).

### **IN SEARCH OF THE WAY BACK HOME (THE POST-SOVIET IDENTITY PROBLEM)**

Psychologists say everybody has a number of subpersonalities, ranging from a regular topdog and underdog to "sacred inner voice" or Socrates's "demon", each seeking to globalize but normally



controlled with variable success by our variably integrated self. Society as a collective self has to create more “supervisors” for its subcurrent phenomena and, of course, claims to be more integrated than an individual. One obvious exception is usually made for the sphere of politics and for politicians, tolerated as a necessary evil. In efforts to rationalize this, the analysis has more than once been elevated from a corny relativism to the ranks of dialectics of integrity and flexibility.

What any formal or informal logical viewpoint would be totally inflexible about is the acceptance of a number of mutually incompatible selves as constituting together one integrated self (an individual or collective subject of conscious thought and responsible action). In the case of an individual, the known split-personality phenomenon is described as basically pertaining to schizophrenia, although particular cases may be contested by evil tongues as simply revealing the enormous amount of flexibility in a person.

In the case of organized communities of people, especially the multicultural nation-states, it is obvious they are bound to synergize various incompatibilities. Yet there has been little experience about dealing with multiple incompatibility manifest in one and the same subject of international relations, questioning the validity of any reference to it under a single name. It is not solely a question of theoretical or academic concern: the academy can afford to surrender temporarily to the complexity of the problem, but governments have to have a clear and unambiguous definition of a subject of international relations/communication. If in the case of other post-Soviet states the problem seems to be painlessly negligible, in the case of Russia, with its powerful military and anti-environmental potential, it cannot be easily discarded.

The major conversion for post-Soviet Russia is the conversion from the ideologically substantiated role of a supervisor of other nations (and, prospectively, the whole world) to that of a rising nation-state. Other newly independent, or newly liberated, states of the former U.S.S.R. are subject to the same process, and everywhere the problem of identity that seemed to have been a priori solved

turns out to be the most painful. For Russia, it is twice as painful, as it really boils down to the problem of “paternity identification”: do Russians want to see themselves as descending from Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, or Lenin/Stalin (the latter inseparable in what they have accomplished as one political self)?

Disruption was implanted in the Russian identity by the Bolsheviks at the dawn of Soviet era. It was maintained with the help of compensatory references to Soviet Russia’s global mission of opening the new era, to its “international duty” as a pioneer of Socialism in the world, and to its role as the ever besieged and endangered bastion of “peace and friendship between nations”. Psychologically, this was the further exploitation of the fatalistic patterns of martyrdom rooted deeply in the traditions of Russian messianism. The pattern, found practically in all domestic history books, describes Russians as predestined to suffer throughout their history because of Russia’s geopolitical situation. Since the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century, the country is seen as a huge shield in the way of Eastern expansion to the West (an unwarranted and unfortunate guarantor of Western prosperity and stability). This image has traveled to the Soviet high school and college textbooks, along with the messianic-scapegoating interpretation of Russia’s global role, with references made to Napoleonic wars and Hitler’s “Drang nach Osten”.

Due to one of the paradoxical effects of the Soviet regime, the Russians have developed an inclusive and dynamic understanding of their own national identity that is open for anyone ready to merge in it. The proviso was a Russian orientation in language/culture/self-perception combined with the compliance with expansively understood great statehood (*derzhava*) under the “elder brother’s” guidance. From this viewpoint, not only Slavic and Orthodox Ukrainians or Byelorussians but also much more remote Abkhazs and Yakuts were viewed as “potential Russians”, naturally and consciously maturing into the “elder-brotherhood”. More complicated were the cases of Georgians or Baltic people,

but it had seemed only a matter of time for them to merge in the same powerful stream.

The historical inevitability of merging into new, absorbing, and neutralizing identities hung painfully over most nations of the Soviet Union, and very few people believed in the feasibility of national liberation. When liberation suddenly came true with the fall of the empire, everybody intensified digging their roots in search of an identity, and the only reliable and desirable one they could discover was what they were before entering the U.S.S.R. A period of revival of pre-Soviet traditions, relations, constitutions, and monarchic paraphernalia followed. Then there came another painful realization that not all of this was presentable on the eve of the twenty-first century, and the search continued... back in the history. What the post-Soviets have so far failed to realize is that (i) the national identity, like any other, should be understood dynamically, (ii) the Soviet period is unerasable from national memory and mentality, and cannot just be skipped in one's self-realization, and (iii) this period has shaped the (dynamically understood) national identities of all post-Soviet nations, and only through acceptance of and reconciliation with this fact can (and should) its legacy be overcome in the modern historical stage of national development. Understandably, populist leaders preferred manipulating frozen stereotypical images to their political advantage instead of stimulating the psychoanalysis of national identity.

The major reward for everyone complying with "the System" was freedom from responsibility, which was transferred automatically to the state (one of the most characteristic features of a totalitarian mentality). The collapse of the Soviet empire has forced upon every element of the disintegrating social structure the necessity to make independent decisions, to develop consistency, and to take responsibility for their actions. Yet, flexibility in mentality has survived in all post-Soviet communities and organizations, and could not avoid the sphere of politics. One of the advantages of post-Soviet Russian policy-making is a skillful deauthorization of dubious actions, as it happened toward the conflict-stricken

areas of Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, or more recently, Bosnia: All consistent and democracy-oriented actions are identified in the West with President Yeltsin, while more doubtful ones are dissolved in metaphysical obscurity. This situation has delayed and complicated the international reaction to Russia's expansive strategies and maintenance of the level of intensity in ethnopolitical conflicts via alternate covert support of the conflicting parties.

### IN EXPECTATION OF THE RUSSIAN GODOT

It is remarkable that, in spite of the abundant and available evidence of the violent conflicts that have marked the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Western analysts continue to assess this process as "relatively peaceful" (probably compared to a nuclear Big Bang everyone had visualized). It is true that there have not been large-scale outbursts of interethnic violence on the territory of the post-Soviet Russian Federation, with the exception of Ingush-Osset conflict in the northern Caucasus region bordering Georgia. However, Russia has been surrounded by dozens of high-intensity conflict areas in the so-called near abroad (newly independent post-Soviet states). In fact, it is only through the mirror of a post-totalitarian mentality that one could dare visualize the Russia of a near future.

It is probably impossible to revive Socialism and Communism as a state ideology in Russia. Yet, the process of socioeconomic differentiation in Russian society is bound to reach a critical point when the tremendous gap between rich and poor will make people look desperately for immediate solutions.<sup>1</sup> According to many in the West, the obvious (though idealized and far from the immediate) solution would be to fill this gap by fostering the private initiative of

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<sup>1</sup> It is an acknowledged fact that there were more Mercedes-600 cars sold in Russia in 1993 alone than in the rest of the world. The estimated figure for minimum survival according to the *Ostankino* Interstate Television (OITV) news release of 28 February 1994 was 165,000 rubles (\$97) a month, while the average monthly salary barely reached 100,000 (\$58). Note that these figures look much better than in the rest of post-Soviet states (cf. the average monthly salary in Georgia, which is a few cents).

the masses. Yet, as of now, this task seems unfeasible. Psychologically, the transition in lifestyle has been one of the greatest problems for Russians, much more so than, say, for the Chinese who have never, even during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, been alienated from small-scale private initiative and ownership (Russia is slowly overcoming the stage when the newly opened private shops and farmers' corn bins were set on fire by "unknown malefactors" just for the fun of it; but the belief that a neighbor should not lead a better life than you persists among poor people).

The most indicative feature of today's state of mind in Russia is the total distrust of all kinds of democratic political forces. All former democratic leaders have lost much of their popular credit and support, and "democracy" is now perceived as an obscure European term irrelevant in Russian reality. A popular alternative can be viewed in the recent statements of miners' and industrial workers' strikes: "Let us replace the useless government with workers' committees: they will quickly establish the order".<sup>1</sup> The order in question would be nothing else but a populist-style redistribution of goods and supplies, the only form of social justice most Russians have ever known.<sup>2</sup> Market-oriented reform takes years and cannot demonstrate unambiguously its advantages for the lower classes of post-Soviet Russian society. Nostalgia for the justice and order they have been deprived of may become a determining force in the political development of the currently active generation of Russians.

What is the social and political platform that might serve to unify tens of the millions of frustrated people in post-Communist Russia, and could direct and rationalize their needs and aspirations? This question may be answered by comparing two time-sets: one measuring the rate of social effects of the market-oriented transition in Russia; and the other measuring the effects of the combined expected rates of inflation, unemployment and the

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<sup>1</sup> Reported on *Ostankino* Interstate Television News, OITV, 3 March 1994.

<sup>2</sup> A knowledgeable discourse on this issue can be found in Katherine Verdery, "What Was Socialism and Why Did It Fall?" *Contention* 3 (fall 1993): pp. 1-23.

growth of organized crime, and the corruption of the state power. My understanding is that the second rate dangerously exceeds the first, creating the basis for both social explosions and ultranationalist success.

Pushkin and Dostoevsky, the greatest Russian thinkers, pointed to the irrationality in the Russian national character and warned the society against instigating a “typically Russian riot, the most ruthless and senseless of all”.

### **POOR PLAYERS’ BENEFIT ON THE RUSSIAN POLITICAL STAGE**

**1994**

The actual failure of *Russia’s Choice*, a pro-Yeltsin reformist political formation, and the victory of the ultranationalists and Communists in the December 1993 parliamentary elections symbolized the defeat of the democrats’ claims to define Russia’s choice in general, and revealed the tip of the iceberg hidden in the Russian *glubinka* (heartland). There has already been much discussion of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s astounding success in the elections, including panic-stricken Western media reaction, parallels with Weimar Germany raised in the Russian press, Mr. Yeltsin’s face-saving interpretation, and Mr. Clinton’s traditionally Yeltsin-saving approach to the events.

Back in the U.S.S.R. just at the time of the December 12<sup>th</sup> elections, I had a chance to follow closely the media coverage and both the popular and professional reactions to the elections and their outcome. Among all democratic and progress-oriented people in the former Soviet Union, the reaction has been no less worried than in the West, although they appear to have long lost any ability to panic.

My assessment has been even more pessimistic and disquieting than theirs: The elections have shown that the real danger to the reforms in Russia and to security in the world is rooted deeper than any Western analyst is ready to go. In broad sections of the population of all ages, there is fruitful soil for the revival of the vision of Russia’s expansive mission in the world. The increasingly popular

Russian word *derzhava* (the great-power state) etymologically comes from “hold firmly”.

Painful post-Soviet development has once again confirmed that economic deprivation can blunt all feelings in people except those breeding ethnic radicalism (appreciating Zhirinovskiy’s anti-Semitism in a weird kind of ethnopolitically relativist way, Russian chauvinists remarkably prefer to overlook the fact that he is at least half Jewish himself). “Seeking easy solutions out of frustration” (the Yeltsin-Clinton interpretation of the outcome of the December 12<sup>th</sup> elections) is no more than a side effect. Remarkably, along with seemingly simple and unpretentious rural and urban people, the great bulk of voters for Zhirinovskiy and his Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia (the LDP) were not “dinosaurs” but young people in military uniforms (more specifically, 72% of the strategic military personnel and almost all of the notorious Taman Division of the Russian Army voted for the LDP).

The outcome of the elections was shocking and unexpected not only for the external world (Zbigniew Brzezinski in a November 1993 television interview waved the Zhirinovskiy problem away saying that he was such a nut, he had no chance to succeed) but for the Russian president himself. Passive public reaction to Yeltsin’s suppressive measures following the October 1993 coup attempt was misinterpreted and mistaken for popular support. To a great (but not infinite) extent, Russians are submissive to authorized violence, even if they dislike it. Socioculturally, Russians, like other ex-Soviets, are more prepared for authoritarian rule than democracy. Millions of ethnic Russians throughout the Former Soviet Union (FSU) who have identified with the Soviet regime would now appreciate any imperialist *derzhava* (nation-state-power) fostering force; and in Russia, democrats are now automatically identified with weak and worthless liberals or political adventurers, as opposed to *gosudarstvenniks* or *derzhavniks* (supporters of strong nation-state power).

According to the widespread version in the Russian press, the LDP and Zhirinovskiy as a political figure were created in the late

1980s by the KGB to undermine the emerging Gorbachev style of party pluralism. The Soviet KGB had faithfully served the C.P.S.U. Central Committee and its secretary general, but that time it had rightfully seen the danger to its very existence and decided to play its own game. According to this version, Zhirinovsky's grotesque figure was designed to help create a repulsive reflex against any sort of liberalization and pluralism in the country: "Look what happens and what kind of leaders can emerge if the ideology is neglected and the ruling party loosens its reins". Even so, a ridiculed vaudeville character grew to outsmart his creators and gather strength for a surprising advance.

1994

Belief in the validity of the "science of Marxism" in assessing the prospect of the cold war between the two worldwide systems had provided for most Russians a compensating mechanism for many inferiority-fostering realities. Zhirinovsky has skillfully manipulated a defeated nation's syndrome, resulting from the fall of the Soviet Union, by offering a new compensating mechanism for Russia's troubled psychology rather than for its ruined economy.

Along with its sources of funding, the list of LDP members remained for a long time a mystery until a search by Russian journalists (spurred by a 1990 Russian presidential campaign resulting in Yeltsin's victory but also in over two million votes for Zhirinovsky) brought them to the now breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia, one of the fortresses of the *Soyuz* pro-Communist parliamentary group and the whole pro-Union movement. As it turned out, almost 80% of the LDP party list was then composed of Abkhazian residents, who are known to have almost unanimously voted for maintaining the Soviet Union in the March 1991 referendum. What did the Liberal Democrats in Moscow have to do with the outrageous pro-Communists in Abkhazia?

The answer to this question would inevitably lead to even more bizarre and complicated revelations. Who pulled the strings that allowed Zhirinovsky to be granted in the fall of 1993 much more pre-election television time than his rivals, substantially contributing to his success and causing Mr. Yeltsin's amazement and rage? On



the other hand, Yeltsin had by that time (right after the October 1993 coup attempt) already sponsored a Zhirinovskiy-styled crackdown on “persons of the Caucasus nationality”: This term is a pearl of Moscow folklore, representing a popular and essentially racist attitude toward the darker-haired and darker-skinned non-Slavic southerners. They have been unfairly perceived, along with the Jews, as a source of all misfortune in Russia (a widespread story asserts that Stalin, Beria and... Shevardnadze hated and brought misfortune to Russia because of their non-Russian ethnic origin). And Ruslan Khasbulatov, speaker of the Russian parliament (and, along with Rutskoi, a key figure in the coup), was very conveniently a Chechen. A classic safety valve has had its usual effect with the masses, and the government got a breathing space to gather strength and re-establish a shaky equilibrium in the society.

No less a frightening development in Russia is the growing popularity of figures like Alexander Rutskoi. His long and winding career includes being a professional career Soviet airborne colonel, promoted by then rising hero Boris Yeltsin to the ranks of vice chairman of the Russian Federation, to being the liberator of Gorbachev during the August 1991 coup, to being the critic of Yeltsin and the collaborator of the Russian president’s (equally rapidly transfigured) former confederate Ruslan Khasbulatov, to being the originator (along with Khasbulatov) of the September 1993 coup, to being an inmate who received amnesty from the newly elected Russian parliament in December 1993. It seems that he has finally acquired what he lacked in his political image — a former political prisoner’s charisma — and is now heading for the new round of his political career as a headman of pro-Communist, retrograde, and anti-reformist forces.

Getting rid of the great-power chauvinists like Zhirinovskiy or Rutskoi in Russia will be much more difficult a task than ousting Gamsakhurdia was in a domestic-styled, mini-coup in Georgia in January 1992. And if these grotesque figures are removed from the political scene, before long, another will be invented: Russian Terminator 3.

## Ethnicity, the State, and Security

Proceedings of a Workshop  
Held at Stanford University Under the Auspices  
of the Minnesota-Stanford-Wisconsin  
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and Cooperation  
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# 1994

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Visiting Research Fellow at CISAC, Stanford University. *Ethnicity, The State, and Security*; Proceedings of a Workshop Held at Stanford University Under the Auspices of the Minnesota-Stanford-Wisconsin; MacArthur Consortium of International Peace and Cooperation; February 1994; Center for the International Security and Arms Control, Stanford University.

## NATIONALISM: ISOLATION AND INTEGRATION TREND (THE CASE OF GEORGIA)<sup>1</sup>

Among the visible effects of the post-cold-war reality is the rising role of state-corroding ethnic conflict and the ethnic-related violence, which has taken the most intolerable form in the former Yugoslavia. One, and more immediate way of interpreting this process, already utilized by political analysts, is a re-active functionalist explanation of it as a painful search for new identities, or revival of old, forgotten ones, amidst the fragmenting reality caused by the fall of empires. Another, less obvious yet plausible interpretation may be based on a pro-active realist interpretation of ethnonationalism as a rising and basically destructive force capitalizing on the global need for structural and cultural transformation in human society. It can hardly be expected that this force will be balanced through an equally pro-active joint effort of international community.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: we are publishing a shorter version of this article.

The parties to conflict usually energetically protest when someone calls their conflict ethnic, or ethnic related (this has been the case both in the former Soviet Union and in the former Yugoslavia). By their estimation, all major conflicts are designed and scheduled elsewhere, and their region is chosen as a polygon for testing and/or ensuring some external political force's domination (this may be some great superpower, G-7, or even the United Nations). Whatever they are called, in the Caucasus region alone the conflicts have already claimed tens of thousands of lives, produced over 1.5 million refugees and displaced persons in Azeri-Armenian conflict, and another 200,000 within a few days of the Abkhazians' latest "victorious" secession from Georgia.

The West's answer to this global challenge has basically been the idea of multiculturalism. The U.S.A. is among the countries which will face the powerful cultural transformation in the nearest decades. It's multicultural solution will inevitably be confronted by a growing number of nations seeking the opposite solution through ultranationalism, secessionism and ethnic cleansing. The most distinctive feature, a litmus test for discerning acceptable and pathologic national-liberation doctrines, is their attitude toward cultural, ethnic and psychological isolationism.

At the same time, not a single ethnic conflict has been objectively motivated or politically productive. On the contrary, Bosnia has' provided a startling example of self-reproducing and self-proliferating violence which suggests of the mass mental/moral degeneration in all the parties involved in that type of conflict. Rationalization of the phenomenon of growing ethnic violence has so far been made only in a behavioristic way, leaving a mystery everything that did not fit into the simplistic pattern.

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There was a profound difference between the seceding Soviet republics on the part of national self-realization and identity. The three Baltic nations were annexed to the Soviet Union just before World War II (along with the bordering Finnish territory) and, despite the most intensive Sovietization methods imposed on them,

simply would not have sufficient time to Russify. The same goes for Western Ukraine, as well as the most part of Moldova Sovietized due to the WWII. The Georgian situation was entirely different (see below), and the Armenian case is no less remarkable. But the most amazing is probably the case of Ukrainian nationalism, in view of the similarity of languages and cultures (the Kiev kingdom was the cradle of Russia) and over three centuries of unified existence under the elder brother's (don't accidentally mix up who's who in age!) governance, which should not normally suggest a strong identity feeling.

Georgia had been part of the Russian Empire in 1801-1917, after several centuries of Muslim domination when being committed to Christianity was seen as the only way to survive as a nation. The Russian revolution had reopened the door into independence that was quickly slammed by the Bolsheviks. As a part of the Soviet Union from 1921 till 1991, Georgians have been known as the proud and independent-minded people extremely hard to submit or assimilate. And yet, there was hardly any other non-Russian nation in the Union as affected by the totalitarian system as Georgians. This is the only rational explanation for the fact that the extreme (to the extent of being grotesque) ultranationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia might get unprecedented support (and 87% votes for presidency). The basically defective and mixed nationalist movement in Georgia has later lost popular support not because the nationalist ideas lost their attraction but because they proved to be unfeasible in view of the Russian interference.

It would have been as unfair to attribute Gamsakhurdia's cult in Georgia to the anti-imperialist uprising of the repressed national spirit, as it is dangerous to ascribe Zhirinovskiy's growing popularity in Russia to the mass frustration caused by deprivation and insecurity (Mr. Boris Yeltsin's interpretation). The first visible manifestation of the post-Soviet Russian nationalism has shocked and appalled the unprepared West which hurried to bury their head in the oblivious sand of economy-based explanations.

1994

## THE BOLSHEVIK LEGACY IN GEORGIAN NATIONALISM

January 6, 1992, after the armed opposition made the Georgian president Gamsakhurdia flee and broke into his locked office, they found the book in Russian left opened on his desk. The chapter title read “The Controllable Anarchy as Means of Social Management”. The president had sought the absolute control over the society, but the anarchy he had planted turned out to be uncontrollable.

Gamsakhurdia realized quite well that Georgians, as any other Soviet successor nation, came to independence with a distinctively disbalanced psychology, a whimsical blend of traditional, or would-be traditional, and Soviet attitudes and complexes. The problem was to construct a paradigm under an attractive name that would exploit the stable patterns of the already shaped mentality without explicitly referring to them. In fact, he faced the same problem as Lenin in pre-October Russia. Yet, the results have been strikingly different: Lenin’s creation survived for over seven decades, while Gamsakhurdia’s regime did not grow out of the infantile stage.

Apart from the obvious facts that Ilyich and Zviad had operated on the enormously different scales and displayed largely incompatible personalities, the comparative analysis of their political behavior shows both a striking similarity of method whenever it worked, and an equally striking discord whenever the “disciple” took his own way.<sup>1</sup>

The natural basis for both attempts to build a popularly sponsored repressive regime was populism. But Lenin did not utilize or reinforce the Russian nationalism as he faced the problem of unifying the vast ethnically and culturally diversified area, in perspective expanding indefinitely beyond Russia. So, the doctrine had to be thoroughly non-nationalist. Gamsakhurdia has completely ignored the ethno-cultural diversity of Georgia and the already existing sub-republican autonomous formations, trying to build a self-centric

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<sup>1</sup> Why the post-Soviet mass mentality turned out so manipulable, can be to a great extent revealed through the Girardian mimetic rivalry mechanisms.

unitary nation-state. Right to the present day federalism remains a spooky word in Georgia.

The Soviet regime had dwelt on ideology. Zviad understood the importance of ideology for the kind of regime he had in mind (which was also what people were used to comply with). Among his first decrees was creation of the Association for National Ideology, which had immediately started its natural witch-hunting activities.

Both grand and the mini leader reinforced and manipulated the mass self-defence and self-aggrandizement mechanisms, for which the most luring way lies through a sacrificially defined isolationism. The Georgian isolationism during Gamsakhurdia's rule was a small-scale reflection of the grand isolationism of the Soviet empire (see more in detail below).

As for the No.2 Bolshevik, Zviad's kinsman and "father of all nations" uncle Joe, Zviad had borrowed from him the conspiratorial attributes and labels like "people's enemy" (transformed into "the nation's enemy"), and the personalized way of identification for the image of enemy (in the latter case it was Eduard Shevardnadze, whose assigned task was described as that of destroying the Georgian nation and bringing it back into the eternal Russian domination<sup>1</sup>).

Despite the diametrically opposite state policies towards religion, both leaders in question had utilized the mind patterns based on Orthodox Christian tradition in people, but Lenin did it while this tradition was still alive in mass psychology, while Gamsakhurdia was trying to galvanize what had long been dead.

Durability of the Soviet regime was largely based on the extreme patience of Russian people, their submissiveness to authorized violence, while a distinctive feature of the Georgian mass psychology has been impatience and unrestfulness (fortunate in this case).

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<sup>1</sup> Note that no one but ethnic Georgian, and a well known, meaningful personality might serve as a personification for the enemy image.

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ISOLATIONISM

The Georgian nationalist rule had utilized all the features of mythologized national consciousness. It is important to bear in mind that nothing could capture mass perception in Georgia unless there was a melodramatic strain to it (even the most unlikely things had to be delivered in a dramatized form, e.g. in media broadcasts if they wanted the masses to concentrate on them). The archetype-permeated collective unconscious that dominated the Georgian society of the late 1980s, could not induce motivations for the independence or statehood as such. People needed a Messiah, a legend, an epic poem come true. The play waited for the recognizable images to fit into the cast of characters.

Soon all the attributes were at hand. There was the Nation (Georgia) enslaved by the Villain (Russian empire) and destined to be liberated by the People awakened by the Hero (a vacancy soon secured by Zviad) through a sacrificial act. Note that it is the Hero, not the People, who is identifiable with the Nation, and thus has the right to be referred to as the Messiah (“Georgia is Zviad”, sang a popular song not leaving a trace of doubt about the force of implication). The Villain is acting through the Demon (false prophet; a role assigned to Shevardnadze), a Traitor of his nation surrounded the by Agents of the Villain. The People have to suffer the purification by sorting out the Agents in order to enjoy being the Nation. The Hero is destined to defeat the Traitor (Demon) and liberate his People from, the Villain. Accordingly, the legend shaped about Zviad’s martyr life tortured by the Traitor (Zviad had spent a year in a KGB prison in 1970s when Shevardnadze was the Communist leader of the Soviet Georgia), and the noble act of revenge was anticipated.

Small nation on the outskirts of the grand empire should have developed its complexes. The compensation mechanisms had to be located. The terms “liberation”, “independence” had quickly found a remarkable substitute. The word “secession” in Russian and Georgian languages sounds like “detachment”, and in Georgian it has the connotations of “standing out”, or “singling out”. That was exactly

what people expected from the ongoing political process: the practical proof that they represent an outstanding nation. Gamsakhurdia in his work "The Spiritual Mission of the Georgian Nation" has tried to esoterically substantiate the chosen role of Georgia, from as far as being the cradle of the whole of Mediterranean culture, and right to the judgment day which God is going to conduct in... the Georgian language. There were not many in Georgia who took all this stuff too seriously, but it was no time for the skepticism: priority of undermining the Soviet empire could be at any moment taken away by the nationalist movements in other republics.

National liberation is a positive, pro-active action, which requires a collective effort to solve the problem. Detachment is a self-protective, re-active way of escaping from a problem, typical for a disbalanced psychology. Making this shift, maybe not quite consciously, the Georgian nationalist leaders found the way to the hearts of the inhibited and affected masses, who had equally fervently supported all suppressive regimes and all charismatic leaders. Isolationism makes life easier, as external reference points no more exist, and there are no more mediocrities. Everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in collective drama of the national liberation.

The sacrificial mechanism was structured, but it could not move without fuel; which meant: the blood had to be shed. And the situation ripened for the breakthrough to the nationalist advantage: the skillfully staged continuous rallies and hunger-strikes in Spring 1989 actually blocked out the Georgian government building, and the summoned Russian troops finally cracked down on the unarmed rallying people on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989. The popular leaders promptly disappeared from the scene, but seventeen ralliers (mostly women) were brutally killed, hundreds were injured, and thousands poisoned with the CS gas. The tragedy has shocked the world, and raised the wave of protests in the USSR. Later Gamsakhurdia used to boast before the foreign journalists that if not the April 9<sup>th</sup>, the Communist system would not collapse, the Eastern Europe would not be liberated, and Germany would not be reunited (checkmate

1994



to Shevardnadze who is known to have contributed enormously to these processes).

The Soviet regime has developed conspiratorial networks in mass psychology: the country was pictured as a bastion of truth and progress besieged by the “international imperialism” led by the USA. Rivalry-based psychological mechanisms helped utilize this mentality for the nationalist goals in post-Soviet Georgia. The “natural enemy” (=Russia) was more and more linked by the Georgian official propaganda with the American imperialism, until it developed to embrace the global deadly plot of the imperialist forces against Georgia. The only solution offered (and imagined) was the idea of the anti-Russian alliance of neighboring nations called “the Caucasus House”, under the natural leadership of Georgia and virtually isolated from the rest of the world. “It is not for the benefit of the present or succeeding generations that we’re working here, but in order to preserve our nation as a certain specific phenomenon”, said Zviad’s Prime-Minister Besarion Gugushvili at one of the TV transmitted sessions of Georgian Parliament.

The nationalist regime in Georgia collapsed within one year, leaving a bizarre trace in the nation’s history, and a heap of otherwise avoidable problems.

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## **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS**

GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI: We have discussed the ethnic phenomenon from many viewpoints – it is very much linked to statehood and self-determination. In the Soviet Union, the problem went from realization of self-determination to secession. There, secession became a reactive form of self-determination; self-determination is pro-active and assertive. Self-determination forced secession. In Georgia, the word “secession” has the connotation of standing-out or sticking-up from the rest. The idea is to show yourself off against the background of other nations.

The Soviet Constitution was detached from reality, unfeasible; it viewed nations as freed, and the union of nations as unbreakable. How can nations be free if the union is unbreakable? This is a contradiction. The state structure of the Soviet Union can be compared to the matrioshka doll, open one, come to another, to another, to another. The idea is that if you have an outburst at one of the levels, the lower levels would balance it. Minorities in the post-Soviet Union would prefer to be in an Empire rather than in a Republic, because an Empire is de-ethnicized.

The idea of Soviet culture has been the consolidologists' solution to the multi-national problem. It was the ideas that you should have an overlapping of cultures in Russia and not let the union break. The reaction to this was a rise of nationalist, ethnic movements. The off-balanced reaction to this was isolationism. The most natural gesture is to cover your face with your hand to hide from the outside world.

KHUTSISHVILI addressed ethnic identity as an in-group and out-group relationships. It is interesting, he said, that we can consider it within a stimulus relation. There are several stages to defining an enemy: first is the personal reaction to the situation coming from the out-group. The personal response historically grew into the kinship response. Historically vendetta has been the way to define the enemy as against persons who have a kin relationship. From vendetta, it went up to the ethnic solution; not a blood relationship, but an ethnic relationship.

A group needs a leader – a leader must be sincere and charismatic, which means that the leader should be able to keep the problem at the irrational level; keeps it from being rationalized.

Why is strong language general and necessary? Because there is some stress relief through it. It reinforces the generalized hatred, which is necessary and becomes a requirement for in-group unity. If you cannot accept and express hatred toward the out-group, then you cannot be part of the in-group.

There is a state monopoly of violence to achieve stable relationships between groups of the society. In the former Soviet Union, this monopoly is eroding. Within the transition from a totalitarian state to a transition to democracy, this monopoly erodes. KHUTSISHVILI explained that the state monopoly of violence is irrational, and that the monopoly should be as personalized as possible.

KHUTSISHVILI concluded that this is a description of the complexity of the ethnic situation in the former Soviet Union. Hopefully, he said, the worst stage has already passed.

ABSTRACT

The Georgian case serves as an illustration of the problems of violent ethnic conflict inside the former Soviet Union. The paper is divided into four sections.

The first describes the civil wars that have afflicted the country: Abkhaz and South Ossetia (Shida Kartli). The second is an ethnodemographic profile of the country. Most striking here is the fact that civil conflict has involved two of the smallest groups of minorities in the republic, the Abkhaz comprising just over 15% of the population, and the Ossets around 3% prior to hostilities. By contrast, relations between the majority and the larger minorities, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis, are quiet.

The third section is an account of the historical roots of ethnic conflict in Georgia. Of greatest significance here is to show that Soviet national policy played a key role in laying the basis for subsequent civil conflict. It promoted a consolidation of Georgian ethnonational identity, while the creation of autonomous jurisdictions inside the republic created divergences in elite interest between majority and minorities. The nature of minorities was similar in Georgia to that elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. The frustrations ethnic minorities experienced in the absence of opposition democracy were similar to those elsewhere in the former Soviet Union.

The final section discusses the role of Russian intervention as factors contributing to the transformation of a tense situation in relations between Ossets and Abkhaz on the one hand and Georgians on the other into open civil conflict. With regard to the Russian role, it is plausible that the Russians manipulated ethnic tensions in Georgia in such a way as

# 1995

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## ETHNIC CONFLICT IN GEORGIA

### INTRODUCTION

In many respects, the case of Georgia is closest to that of the former Yugoslavia among the cases considered in this study. First, as in Yugoslavia, the ethnic terrain is highly complex, as conflicts or potential conflicts involve sizeable groups of Georgians, Ossets, Abkhaz, Armenians, Azeris, and others. Second, there is (or was) considerable territorial intermixture of ethnic groups, notably of Georgians and Ossets, Georgians and Abkhaz, and Armenians and Azeris.

Third, it resembles Yugoslavia in the degree to which open conflict has affected the social, economic, and political lives of the country's population. Large scale military operations have largely destroyed the economies of South Ossetia (Shida Kartli) while

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\* The authors are grateful for the support of the Cooperative Security Competition Program of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada) and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada for their support of this research.

significantly damaging that of the country as a whole. The single largest sector of the economy is, as of September 1994, that of foreign humanitarian assistance. Ongoing conflicts have fostered large movements of refugees<sup>1</sup>, both from region to region within the country (e.g. of Georgians from South Ossetia and Abkhazia to Central Georgia or Mingrelia) and to adjoining regions of neighbouring countries (e.g. of Ossets to Northern Ossetia). Religion and the perceived threat of islamicization play a significant role in both the Yugoslav and the Georgian conflicts.

On the other hand, it differs from the Yugoslav case in at last five ways. First, the demographic balance is far more favourable to the dominant national group in Georgia<sup>2</sup>. Those ethnic groups actively attempting to secede from Georgia (the Ossets and the Abkhaz) are demographically insignificant. However, and second, there exist far stronger (and politically significant) subethnic (regional, cultural, and linguistic) cleavages within the Georgian majority than, say, among Serbs or Croats. Among other factors, these have contributed to significant civil violence within the ethnic Georgian community in 1991-1992 and 1993-1994<sup>3</sup>.

Third, the level of international involvement in efforts to manage, resolve, or mitigate the consequences of civil war in Georgia is far lower than that in Yugoslavia. Specifically, the United Nations has refused a substantial role in peacekeeping. CSCE involvement is minimal. Fourth, the attitude taken by the international community towards the dismemberment of the state in question is substantially different. There appears to be no willingness to legitimize separation in Georgia, or to redraw the country's frontiers. Finally, a far greater role has been played by a hegemonic regional power (Russia) in determining the direction of conflict in Georgia.

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<sup>1</sup> The 1989 population of Georgia was around 5.4 million. Most reliable estimates of refugees from the Osset and Abkhaz conflicts cluster around 300,000-350,000, or around 5-6% of the population of the country as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> As noted below, Georgians comprise approximately two thirds of the population of the republic.

<sup>3</sup> Because of the focus of this study on interethnic conflict, these issues are not discussed in detail here.

In this case, we provide first of all a summary account of the two major ethnic conflicts affecting the republic. In attempting to explain these conflicts, we then examine the ethnodemographic situation in the country and the historical roots of Georgian and minority nationalism. We follow with an analysis of the effect of perestroika on the ethnic politics of Georgia. This discussion is abbreviated, since the subject has been treated in a more general sense elsewhere in this volume. We conclude with an examination of the international dimensions of civil strife in Georgia – the roles of outside actors and the impact of the conflict on regional security.

We argue that ethnic nationalism in Georgia has two principal vectors – Georgian-Russian relations and the relationship between the Georgian majority and the various minorities found within the republic. The problem of ethnic conflict in Georgia concerns primarily relations between Georgians on the one hand and the Abkhaz and Ossets on the other, although further problems (e.g. between Georgians and Armenians and between Azeris and Armenians) may be anticipated in the republic. The resurgence of politicized ethnic consciousness among both the majority and certain minorities is a product both of profound historical factors, the socioeconomic and political conditions of perestroika, and deliberate manipulation by majority and minority political elites. It has been exacerbated profoundly by the behaviour of an external power – Russia – apparently intent on the use of local conflicts to restore its traditional position of influence in the region. The principal consequences of ethnic conflict in the republic are severe social and economic dislocation, sustained political instability, and a worsening of relations between the affected groups that may take a great deal of time to overcome. These conflicts have also had serious regional consequences, both because of their linkage to groups in the Russian North Caucasus and because of the disruption of flows of essential goods to Azerbaidzhan and Armenia through conflict-affected areas. In contrast, the implications for European security as a whole are marginal, though the Georgian conflict along with others in the former Soviet Union is forcing Western states to define or redefine their per-

spectives on Russian policy in the CIS. In particular, the deepening involvement of Russia in Georgia's affairs, and the apparent shift in Russian emphasis from the exacerbation of local conflict to efforts at peacekeeping and conflict resolution raise the question of how the West should respond to a Russian assertion of influence in the CIS region that may significantly constrain the sovereignty of the non-Russian former Soviet republics.

### **ETHNIC CONFLICT IN GEORGIA**

Georgia has been significantly affected by two ethnic conflicts since independence. The first is the conflict in the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast of the republic (Shida Kartli). Open conflict began in 1990, after the Republic of Georgia's effective declaration of independence.<sup>1</sup> In the fall of 1990, the South Ossetian regional Soviet responded by adopting a declaration transforming the *oblast* into the "South Ossetian Soviet Democratic Republic". A day later, the Supreme Soviet of Georgia annulled this decision. It was then renewed in October of 1990, to be followed by elections to the new republic's Supreme Soviet in December. The meeting of the newly elected Supreme Soviet on December 11, 1990 provoked the Georgian Supreme Soviet (now dominated by partisans of Zviad Gamsakhurdia after Georgia-wide elections in October) to abrogate Southern Ossetia's status of autonomy.

Violence broke out in the region in December of 1990 and military operations continued until mid 1992. By all accounts, the conflict between local militias at the village level was particularly brutal. Local forces were strengthened on one side by the Georgian National Guard and the paramilitary organization "Mkhedrioni", and on the other by volunteers from North Ossetia<sup>2</sup>. The capital of the region was shelled over a considerable period with massive damage

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<sup>1</sup> In March 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Georgia abrogated the 1921 agreements by which Georgia joined the Russian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic.

<sup>2</sup> Some maintain also that Russian forces stationed in Tskhinvali until early 1992 also provided assistance to local Osset militias.

to buildings and infrastructure. Estimates of casualties in the war vary. The UN estimated total casualties from both the Abkhaz and the Osset wars at the end of 1992 to be somewhat greater than 1000 dead. The CSCE, which has specific monitoring responsibilities for the conflict, believes this to be a low estimate (CSCE, 1993, 133). Georgian authorities maintain that upwards of 40,000 Georgian refugees fled South Ossetia to the Gori region and to Tbilisi. Osset authorities claimed a flow of refugees of around 100,000 from Georgia to North Ossetia.<sup>1</sup>

By the time of the Sochi Accord (June 1992), which established a monitored ceasefire and a process for political resolution, the economy of the region had been destroyed. Beyond Tskhinvali itself, law and order has collapsed and the countryside has degenerated into heavily armed banditry. The lack of central control over the region, the loose authority of the regional government in Tskhinvali, and the region's contiguity to the Russian Federation have made, according to many reports, a haven for organized criminal activity, notably smuggling.

Since the Sochi Accord, a reasonably effective ceasefire has operated in South Ossetia. A peacekeeping force of Russians, Georgian government forces, and local Osset and Georgian military units has done a reasonably good job of minimizing the continuation of violence. None the less, there has been little progress on the political track, owing to Georgian reluctance to restore significant autonomy to the *oblast* and to serious political divisions within Georgia's elite on this and other issues, to the radicalization of and lack of unity within the Osset political elite, and also presumably because those forces in South Ossetia benefiting from the continuation of this abnormal situation have no desire to see it normalized. At a

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are somewhat higher than those mentioned by the United Nations in its assessment of humanitarian needs in Georgia in 1993. See UN, 1993, 2-3. The UN cites numbers of displaced Georgians at 15000, and of Ossets at 12,600 at the time the report was written. These figures do not, however, include Ossets that crossed the frontier into North Ossetia. The North Ossetians claim that around 50,000 such people took refuge in the North Ossetian Autonomous Oblast of the Russian Federation.



deeper level, normalization is impeded by the deep bitterness of the resident population and refugees<sup>1</sup>.

Once the situation in Southern Ossetia had stabilized, attention turned to the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. The roots of the conflict between the autonomous republic and the central government predate Georgia's reestablishment of independence and the collapse of Soviet rule. In the summer of 1989, the government announced its intention to make the Georgian section of the Abkhaz State University a branch of the University of Tbilisi. Civil violence ensued and 22 people died.

In 1990, "sectional parties" were excluded from the Georgian Supreme Soviet elections, a move clearly aimed at the Abkhaz, Ossets, and other minorities, since their political formations were ethnically and regionally based. Abkhaz delegates to the autonomous republic's Supreme Soviet responded by declaring Abkhaz independence from Georgia. This action was then annulled by the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Georgia.

When Gamsakhurdia's Round Table/Free Georgia coalition took power in October 1990, Abkhaz authorities refused to accept the centrally appointed prefect. In March 1991, they defied his authority again by participating in the USSR referendum on the future of the union. Of the 52.4% of the Abkhaz republic's population that voted, 98.4% voted for the preservation of the union<sup>2</sup>. None the less, relations between the Gamsakhurdia Government and Abkhaz authorities were reasonably quiet in 1991, largely as a result of the preoccupation of the Georgians with the Osset question. That said, a conflict was eventually likely, since the ethnic Abkhaz authorities had not abandoned their movement towards secession.

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<sup>1</sup> CSCE monitors reported in 1993 that the most striking aspect of their work in the field was the depth of the hatred dividing Georgian and Osset populations in the region. Interviews in Tbilisi, March 1993. These feelings are perhaps strengthened by the cultural milieu, which is one of close kinship ties and a tradition of vendetta.

<sup>2</sup> Dale, 1993, p. 48. For useful background on the roots of the Abkhaz conflict, see Elizabeth Fuller, "Georgia, Abkhazia, and Checheno-Ingushetia", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report I, #6 (February 1992), pp. 4-5.

Matters changed rapidly in 1992. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the first president of independent Georgia, was overthrown and forced to flee Tbilisi at the end of 1991. Forces loyal to him mounted an insurrection against the new central authorities in the spring of 1992 in Mingrelia, a region of Western Georgia contiguous to Abkhazia. As hostilities in South Ossetia wound down in the summer of 1992, the Georgian Government and “Mkhedrioni” were able to transfer substantial forces to the west to engage the supporters of Gamsakhurdia. This conflict, too, was notable for the disorganization and brutality of forces supporting the government<sup>1</sup>. The insurgents used sanctuaries in areas of eastern Abkhazia populated by Mingrels in their struggle against the central government, and in the summer kidnapped a number of Georgian officials, including deputy Prime Minister Alexander Kavsadze, and took them to hiding places in Abkhazia.

This drew the attention of central authorities back to Abkhazia. In a general sense, a solution to the security problem in Mingrelia required the denial of Abkhaz sanctuary to Gamsakhurdia’s supporters. More specifically, the Georgian government sought to move into Eastern Abkhazia in order to free the kidnapped officials. Reports at the time suggested that the Georgian government had received tacit if not explicit agreement from the Abkhaz authorities for a limited operation in the Gali region.<sup>2</sup> When Tengiz Kitovani, Defence Minister and head of the National Guard, encountered little resistance in his advance on Gali, he decided, reportedly on his own initiative, to continue to Sukhumi in order to bring the autonomous republic’s government under control<sup>3</sup>. The chair of the

<sup>1</sup> As Fuller (1993, p. 23) recounts, in July 1993, “Mkhedrioni” forces reacted to an attack in Tskhalendzhika with massive reprisals against the civilian population.

<sup>2</sup> Chervonnaya, 1993, p. 188, maintains that on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, Shevardnadze called Ardzinba and secured his agreement on cooperation to free those detained by the insurgents.

<sup>3</sup> Dale, 1993, p. 48, notes the significance of the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet’s declaration of sovereignty in July 1992 in explaining Kitovani’s decision. Interviews in Tbilisi in 1992 and 1993 suggest, however, that his motivation was essentially political. He felt that a rapid victory by forces under his leadership in Abkhazia would make him a national hero.

Abkhaz Supreme Soviet fled along with his government to Gudauta, and the Georgian Government, impressed by Kitovani's apparent success, dissolved the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet, and installed a Georgian-dominated military council in the region. The result was a civil war in Abkhazia. The Abkhaz side, benefiting from the arrival of volunteers from the North Caucasus, and arguably from the support of Russian forces stationed in the region (see below), reasonably rapidly consolidated their control over northwestern Abkhazia, taking Gagra in October 1992. In the spring of 1993, this was followed by an offensive on Sukhumi. Their failure in March and again in July to take the city, coupled with shifts in the Georgian government in May that rendered negotiation easier, led to a ceasefire agreement on 27 July, 1993 that was both mediated and guaranteed by the Russian Government.

The ceasefire agreement provided for the separation of combatants, the withdrawal of Georgian forces from Abkhazia, and the encampment of Abkhaz forces and equipment, all under Russian supervision. The Georgian side largely complied with the withdrawal stipulation leaving southern and eastern Abkhazia largely defenceless. In mid-September, 1993, the Abkhaz returned to the offensive and after 11 days took Sukhumi and then the rest of Abkhazia up to the border with Mingrelia.<sup>1</sup>

The fall of Abkhazia initiated a further major flow of refugees, as the Georgian majority of the republic fled the Abkhaz advance, crossing into Georgia through the mountain passes of Svanetia or south and east into Mingrelia. According to the UN, this brought the total number of internally displaced persons in Georgia to some 240,000<sup>2</sup>. The success of the ethnic cleansing of Abkhazia is indicated by the comment of an IGO official who visited Georgian-populated zones of the republic in the spring of 1994. It resembled, in

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<sup>1</sup> For useful accounts of the evolution of the conflict in Abkhazia, see Fuller, 1993 and 1994.

<sup>2</sup> UN, 1994, 8. Georgian sources put the total number of refugees from the latest outflow at approximately 200,000. Interviews in Tbilisi, August 1994.

his words, an empty desert<sup>1</sup>. Initial, informal efforts at repatriation to the Gali region of Abkhazia resulted in violence against returning civilians.

The denouement to the Abkhaz conflict coincided with the renewal of rebellion in Mingrelia, as Gamsakhurdia took advantage of Shevardnadze's vulnerability to return. Mingrel insurgents took control of all the major towns in Mingrelia, and then took the port of Poti, critical to the supply not only of the interior of Georgia, but also of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Sources in Tbilisi suggest that the insurgents were assisted by the Abkhaz, the latter presumably seeking to establish a buffer between their own region and central Georgia, and by ex-defence minister Kitovani, who by this time had joined the opposition to Shevardnadze's Government.

By mid-October, Abkhaz forces were threatening the city of Kutaisi at the gates to Central Georgia, and clearly preparing for an offensive on Tbilisi itself. Government forces, demoralized and disorganized by their ordeal in Abkhazia, and operating in a region (Mingrelia) the population of which was sympathetic to the rebels, showed little capacity for effective resistance. It was at this stage that Shevardnadze capitulated to Russian pressure to join the Commonwealth of Independent States. After his October meeting with Yeltsin in Moscow, the Russians finally weighed in on the side of the government. With Russian military assistance, the Georgians succeeded in eliminating the insurgency in Mingrelia in short order.

In Abkhazia, the Russians again brokered a ceasefire between the belligerents that involved the interposition of a Russian-dominated peacekeeping force along the Inguri River. The ceasefire appears reasonably durable, despite occasional violations in areas where the Georgian withdrawal is not complete, as in the Kodori Hills in the spring and summer of 1994.

As in South Ossetia, there seems to be little progress towards a political resolution. Talks have stalled on several related questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews in Tbilisi, August 1994.

The Abkhaz side maintains that the future of the republic should be decided by referendum. This is a referendum they could never win if full repatriation of Georgian displaced persons occurred. The Georgian side of course maintains that a referendum without repatriation would be invalid. The nub of the negotiations at the time of writing, therefore, is the issue of repatriation, and also that of security of returnees.

In the Abkhaz instance, international involvement has occurred largely under UN auspices. The UN is providing mediation of the conflict in negotiations in Geneva. There is also a small monitoring force on the ground. It currently numbers around 40, and is to grow to 136. The Security Council has assiduously avoided any deeper commitment, largely because of the overload of its peacekeeping circuits, but also because of the sensitivity of substantial UN involvement in the former Soviet Union, given the Russian predisposition to play a leading role in the management of conflict there<sup>1</sup>, the reluctance, given experience in Yugoslavia, to contemplate broadened mandates in unsettled security situations, and, finally, disagreements among the parties as to what the peacekeeping mandate should be<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For an extended discussion of Russian attitudes towards peacekeeping in the former Soviet space, see MacFarlane, 1994; and MacFarlane and Schnabel, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Notably, to the extent that the Abkhaz are willing to contemplate a more substantial UN involvement, it is along the lines of traditional peacekeeping along the disengagement line. The Georgians have sought an expansion of the mandate to embrace monitoring of the repatriation and security for the groups involved.

## ETHNODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The 1989 Soviet census indicated that Georgia had a population of some 5.4 million people. Their ethnic distribution is indicated in Table I.

Table I. The Ethnic makeup of Georgia (1989)

Ethnos	% Share of Population	
	1989	
Georgians	70.1*	
Armenians	8.1	
Russians	6.3	
Azeris	5.7	
Ossets	3	
Greeks	1.9	
Abkhaz	1.8	
Ukrainians	1.0	

\* Note: the Adjar and Georgian Muslim population is included in the total for Georgians. Source: Census of the USSR, 1989.

Several factors are worth noting with regard to Table 1. First is the clear primacy of the Georgian ethnos in the republic's demographic makeup. Georgian national identity has never been threatened by migration to the extent of, say, Estonia, or by assimilation to the extent of Belarus. Soviet census data show the Soviet period as a whole to have been one of the gradual ethnic homogenization of Georgia in favour of the Georgians. In 1939, Georgians made up 61.4% of the population, Armenians 11.7%, and Russians 8.7%. In 1970, the analogous figures were 68.8%, 9%, and 7.4%, in 1979, 68.8%, 9%, and 7.4%. and in 1989, 70.1%, 8.1%, and 6.3%. Since the last census, although reliable data is hard to come by, it is reasonable to assume that, as a result of outmigration of Russians, Greeks, and Armenians, and Ossets, the Georgian position has been further consolidated.

With regard to assimilation, neither miscegenation nor language acquisition appear to pose significant threats. As of 1970, 93.5% of

Georgian marriages were endogamous. In the same year, 63% of urban Georgians and 91.4% of rural Georgians were not fluent in Russian. Demographic and cultural pressure, consequently, did not play the same role in the kindling of Georgian nationalism that it did in the Baltics.

Second, the diminutive share of the two minority groups involved in ethnic conflict is striking. The war in Abkhazia pits a group comprising less than 2% of the population against the majority. That in South Ossetia involves a group comprising only 3%. Larger minorities have, on the whole, remained apolitical, and, thus far, have enjoyed reasonably quiet relations with the majority<sup>1</sup>.

A look at the regional distribution of population is also useful in laying the groundwork for a discussion of ethnic conflict. First, there are significant differences among ethnic groups in their geographical concentration. Russians, for example, are distributed across the republic, mainly in urban centres. Armenians are compactly concentrated along the border between Georgia and Armenia, but substantial numbers live also in Tbilisi and in Abkhazia. Azeris are concentrated in the southeastern and south central portions of Georgia in proximity to the frontiers of Azerbaijan, and (intermixed with Armenians) in proximity to the Armenian frontier, as well in the immediate vicinity of the capital. Given the importance of territorial identification and compact settlement of minorities as a general precondition of ethnic conflict, this would suggest that, in addition to the Osset and Abkhaz questions, there is a marked possibility of conflict involving Armenians and Azeris arising in areas of south central and southeastern Georgia.

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that these relations are stable. There is substantial concern within the Georgian population about Armenian irredentism and the possibility that after the conclusion of the Nagorno-Karabakh episode, Georgia may be next. There is also concern about the rapid natural growth of the Azeri population in southeastern Georgia and in agricultural lands in the vicinity of Tbilisi, and the possibility that this might lead to pressure for frontier rectification. In the 1980's, there was violence between Georgians resettled from the mountains of Svanetia to this area over land. Interviews in Tbilisi, 1992-1994.

One further point bears mention. In certain areas of south central Georgia, Armenian and Azeri villages are interspersed. Given the generally poor relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, there is substantial potential for violence between these communities<sup>1</sup>. The interspersed quality of Georgian and Osset and (in some regions of Abkhazia) and Georgians and Abkhaz, moreover, is likely substantially to complicate the problem of conflict resolution at the local level should Georgian populations return.

With regard to those ethnic groups actively in conflict with the Georgian government, the Abkhaz are concentrated in the Republic of Abkhazia, with insubstantial numbers resident in Mingrelia and elsewhere. The Ossets, by contrast, were more widely spread throughout the country. Only a minority of Ossets lived within the Autonomous Oblast of South Ossetia, the rest living in urban areas and in concentrations of villages in the Gori district and in the area of Borjomi, among others<sup>2</sup>.

Table 2. Ethnic Distribution in Zones of Conflict (1989) – %

	<b>Abkhazia</b>	<b>South Ossetia</b>
Georgians	45.7	30
Ossets	–	70
Abkhaz	17.8	
Russians	14.3	
Armenians	14.6	

From the point of view of the dynamics of conflict and conflict resolution, the two cases are dramatically different. Osset preponderance in the former autonomous oblast' was not and is not threatened by the Georgian population. In the event that an autonomous authority of some sort were reestablished in Southern

<sup>1</sup> Low level violence (primarily hostage-taking) in these areas has occurred for several years.

<sup>2</sup> The 1989 Soviet census reported that of the 164,000 Ossets in Georgia, 70,000 lived in the oblast' and the rest elsewhere in the country. Thirty thousand Georgians also lived in South Ossetia.



Ossetia, this act in itself would address the aspirations of Ossets to self-rule.

In Abkhazia, by contrast, the Abkhaz are a minority in their own jurisdiction. Assuring their preeminence in any post-conflict settlement would mean derogation of the rights of the near-majority Georgian population. Recognition of equal rights for all in a settlement, on the other hand, would deny the Abkhaz control over the autonomous republic's affairs.

In short, the ethnodemographic profile of Georgia is extremely complex and contributes in a number of ways to the initiation and perpetuation of conflict, and to difficulties in its resolution. Paradoxically, although Georgian majority status in the republic is strong and growing stronger, the existence of compact minorities along Georgia's peripheries none the less constitutes a significant potential challenge to the integrity of the Georgian state. The demographic weakness of the Abkhaz hand favoured a strategy of ethnic cleansing and complicates conflict resolution. The interspersal of populations in conflict also renders the task of conflict resolution considerably more complex, particularly when one takes into account the cultural specificities of the populations in question.

## **THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF ETHNIC CONFLICT IN GEORGIA**

### *A. The Pre-Soviet Era*

There is a striking between the prevalent Georgian self-image of ethnic and religious tolerance on the one hand<sup>1</sup> and the explosive and bitter quality of the two ethnic conflicts that have beset the country since 1990. This myth is not too far from historical reality. Relations among ethnic groups have been peaceful for long periods of time in Georgia, not least during the Soviet period. Moreover, the society had developed quite sophisticated mechanisms for the

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<sup>1</sup> All visitors to the old city of Tbilisi are greeted with the information that within a few city blocks there have existed for centuries an Armenian Apostolic Church, a Georgian Orthodox Church, a Russian Orthodox Church, a mosque, and a synagogue without any apparent difficulties between their congregations.

prevention of intercommunal tensions<sup>1</sup>. There was statistically significant miscegenation between ethnic groups now involved in deep conflict. The key question, then, is why interethnic relations were so profoundly exacerbated in 1990-1994.

Following the conceptual sequence of Chapter 1, it should be noted that ethnic divisions within the Republic of Georgia are well-established groups involved (with the exception of the Russians) have existed in the region for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Records of organized Georgian communities (Kartvelian and Svan) date back to Greek encounters with the Colchians, and to Herodotus', Hecataeus', and Seylax's accounts of the region between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC Georgian sources themselves suggest the likelihood of primordial settlement by peoples (Abasgoi and Apsilae) related to groups we now call Abkhaz in Western Georgia in the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD<sup>2</sup>. It is generally accepted that the bulk of the Osset population arrived later, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, as a result of the depopulation of the Shida Kartli region of Georgia during prolonged wars between Persia and the Ottoman Empire for control over the Transcaucasus<sup>3</sup>. In the south of the country, much Armenian settlement is primordial, although many Armenians arrived much later, as refugees from the Ottoman Empire in the second decade of this century. Azeri settlement of parts of south central Georgia dates back to the arrival of the Turks in the region

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<sup>1</sup> In the mountain villages of South Ossetia, for example, there were longstanding exchanges of children between Ossets and Georgians, where children from one ethnic group would live for long periods with families of the other one. Interview with Peter Mamradze, then of the State Committee for Human Rights and Ethnic Relations, August 1992.

<sup>2</sup> They generally maintain, however, that the principal "Abkhaz" ethnic migration was that of the Apsua in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. See Lortkipinadze, 1990, pp. 40-41.

<sup>3</sup> Allen (1932, p. 285) notes that the Mongol census of 1259 put the population of Georgia at between 4.5 and 5.9 million people. The 1836 Russian census put the total population of Kartli and Kakheti regions (Central and Eastern Georgia) at pp. 225,395. He accounts for the decline in terms of the impact of the Black Death and the invasion of Timur in the 150 years subsequent to the Mongol census, and a subsequent 400 year period of war.

in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, although the Azeri population expanded rapidly during the years of Russian and then Soviet rule<sup>1</sup>.

All of these groups have possessed ethnic distinctness for a very long time. Each clearly differs from the others in language, custom, and, frequently, religion, as well as embracing a distinct body of historical myths, be it the Osset identification with the greatness of the Alans, or the Armenian identification with the kingdom of Tigranes II (95-55 BC) and with a subsequent series of depredations at the hands of neighbouring peoples culminating in the genocide committed by the Turks in 1915-1916. For the Georgians, it is the legacy of Queen Tamar (1184-1212) and King David the Rebuilder (1089-1125), when Georgia reached its maximum territorial expanse and size of population. It is noteworthy that a number of these groups identify the “natural” expanse of territory that is their right with the apogee of these historical states<sup>2</sup>. Not surprisingly, there is consequently, considerable overlap in their historical claims.

That said, it is noteworthy that the Georgians and neighbouring ethnoses did not, on the whole, form cohesive ethnically based political communities until the modern era. For much of its history, Georgia was divided into two or more political units, often under the influence of neighbouring states. Although communities of Georgians shared certain basic traits, the topography of the country discouraged a national coalescence of identity. Identities had strong regional roots. Two groups generally identified as “Georgian” (the Mingrels and the Svan) speak languages that in linguistic terms are in different groups of the southern division of the Caucasian language family from Georgian and are not easily comprehensible to mainstream Georgians. That this can place significant limits on ethnonational identification is evident in the outbreak of serious conflict

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<sup>1</sup> For ethnographic information on these groups, see Wixman, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> In 1990, the boarding gate in the Intourist lounge of the Tbilisi airport sported a map of Georgia. It depicted, however, not the Georgia of the Soviet era, but that of Queen Tamar, indicating that Georgian territory covered much of what is now Azerbaijan, Armenia, the autonomous republics of the Russian North Caucasus, and the Stavropol and Krasnodar Oblasts of the Russian Federation.

between the central government and the mainly Mingrel supporters of the late ousted President Gamsakhurdia in 1991 and 1993.

Many date the effective politicization of Georgian ethnicity to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian occupation of Georgia. As Ronald Suny (1988, 114) put it:

*The Georgians, who were incorporated into the Russian Empire in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were still a divided, defeated, inchoate people, sharing an ethnicity with recognizable cultural features. Despite periods of unity and glory in the past, they had faced virtual extinction by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and, except for a few nobles and clerics, possessed little sense of their own nationhood.*

The emergence of Georgia as a conscious political nation during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a product of numerous preconditions, among them the political and economic stability produced by Russian rule, increasing ease of communication within the country and consequent integration of regionally diverse communities, and the spread of modern education to the Georgian political elite. It followed a course quite typical for smaller nations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from renewed attention to history and language through the dissemination of this new consciousness in the educational system and the press to the emergence of open political nationalism<sup>1</sup>.

The Georgian nobility – attempting to cope with economic change and its loss of political power – was the principal progenitor of the movement, both in culture and politics. The union with Russia and the gradual imposition of Russian modes of governance deprived them of the considerable power that the class had enjoyed before union. The commercialization of the economy and the beginnings of industrialization destroyed their economic primacy, displacing them with a predominantly Armenian bourgeoisie. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 deprived noble landowners of the low cost rural labour force on which they had depended. Their

<sup>1</sup> This process in the Georgian case is well presented in Suny, 1988.

general failure to adapt to the structural change through adopting modern agricultural techniques caused many to accumulate growing debts (held largely by the Armenians) and ultimately to lose their land<sup>1</sup>. As the century passed the growing economic pressure faced by the Georgian elite was increasingly joined by the more and more openly chauvinistic approach of the central government to national minorities in the Russian Empire.

Given the narrow social base of both conservative aristocratic nationalists and of the liberal political alternative that appealed mainly to the Armenian bourgeoisie, and the emergence as a result of industrialization of an ethnic Georgian working class, Georgian political thought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century developed a clear social democratic bent, with a view to the mobilization of this new force. Marxism provided a “non-nationalist ideology that was a weapon against both their ethnic enemies: Russian officials and the Armenian bourgeoisie”. It was social revolution that would return Georgia to the Georgians by eliminating both.<sup>2</sup> By 1905, the social democratic movement was the most influential political organization in Georgia. Largely owing to the belief that Georgian self-determination could be achieved only through a revolution in Russia, as well as of the still strong internationalism of the Russian socialist movement, the Georgian struggle for national liberation was folded into the larger struggle against tsarism. Noe Zhordania and Irakli Tsereteli, leaders of the Georgian social democratic movement, played leading roles in the Menshevik wing of the RSDLP between the first (1905) and second (1917) Russian revolutions.

With the collapse of tsarism in February 1917, the social democrats inherited power in Georgia. After a brief experiment with Transcaucasian federalism, and as the Bolsheviks consolidated power in Russia, Georgia declared its independence on May 26, 1918.

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<sup>1</sup> In many respects, as a response to the nobility’s declining economic and political position, the emergence of Georgian nationalism resembles Greenfeld’s (1992) account of the emergence of French nationalism out of the aristocracy under Bourbon absolutism in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>2</sup> Suny, 1988, p. 145.

Georgian authorities chose this route not so much as a result of nationalist aspiration, but owing to differences with the Bolsheviks in Moscow, the collapse of central authority in the Caucasian region, and the growing military threat from Turkey. In this sense, their exercise of national self-determination through secession was a product of circumstances beyond their control, rather than a reflection of nationalist aspiration.

The principal significance of the period of Georgian statehood for this analysis is twofold. First, it provided the Georgians with a moment of independence that provided a potent symbol for future nationalist discourse. The extinction of a viable, orderly and democratically legitimate Georgian state as a result of an invasion by the Red Army – and this after Soviet Russia had recognized in treaty instruments the independence of Georgia – gave this symbol a clear anti-Soviet and anti-Russian content<sup>1</sup>. Second, the period of independence complicated Georgian relations between the Georgian majority and the Osset minority in particular. The Osset peasantry reacted to the Georgian government's land reform policy in 1920 by mounting a rebellion against the central government. This was expeditiously suppressed by the Georgian military, leaving a bitter taste in Osset mouths. One result was that many Ossets cooperated with the Red Army when it entered Georgia in 1921. This in turn created the impression that the Ossets were a Russian fifth column within Georgia<sup>2</sup>.

### *B. The Soviet Era*

Several important further preconditions for ethnic conflict in the Republic of Georgia emanated from the Soviet era. First, as elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, the federalization of the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> See the relevant clauses of the May 1920 treaty between Russia and Georgia as cited by Pipes, 1964, 228. Pipes gives a historical account of Georgian relations with Russia during the period of independence and reannexation on pp. 210-214, 227-228, 234-241.

<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that Georgian sources attribute unrest among the Ossets during the period of Georgian independence to Bolshevik manipulation. See Zhorzholiani, 1992, p. 6.

state provided a locus for the development of nationally oriented political consciousness. The state not only tolerated, but promoted national cultural symbols, such as language and folk custom. It fostered, albeit in truncated form, the growth of national educational institutions such as Tbilisi State University. In its later stages, it provided Georgian political elites with a degree of autonomy that allowed them to consolidate ethnic control over the party and institutions of state power. In all of these respects, it laid important political cultural foundations for the renaissance of Georgian statehood and for the flowering of Georgian nationalism, once the political constraints of Soviet power evaporated.

Second, also as elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, Soviet nationality policy encouraged the national consciousness not only of the titular nationality, but also of minority groups within Georgia. Southern Ossetia received its institutional form as an autonomous jurisdiction for the first time in April 1922. Abkhazia enjoyed several years as a union republic before being reintegrated into Georgia in the mid 1920s as an autonomous republic. Minority-political elites evolved around the new political institutions. Central government support underwrote the epanouissement of minority cultures and language. The protection of the centre also provided insurance against any recrudescence of nationalism on the part of the Georgian majority. The net result was the development of political nationalism not only among the Georgian majority, but also among the two minorities enjoying a degree of political autonomy. The impact of this institutionalization of ethnicity is evident in the fact that whereas the Georgian government has had few problems with the much larger and territorially compact Azeri and Armenian minorities, two of the three autonomous territories in Georgia have been implicated in civil wars since independence<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The third – Adjara – has been the most stable zone of Western Georgia since independence. This reflects in part a belief among Georgians that the Adjars are a distinct part of their own community, rather than an alien apparition. Even here, however, there were significant problems when the Gamsakhurdia government sought to

Third is the question of economic development and its effects on Georgian identity. The Bolshevik seizure of power was followed reasonably rapidly by the more or less complete integration of Georgia's economy into that of the USSR proper. Soviet planners replaced the reasonably diverse agricultural sector in Georgia with a number of cash crop monocultures, notably tea, wine and citrus fruit. Although from the Soviet perspective, this made sense, given the limited capacity to produce semitropical products, it rendered Georgia much more dependent on Russia for staple foods than it had been historically. Georgian industrial development displayed similar dependency links. The mining sector produced for factories elsewhere in the USSR. The Rustavi metallurgical complex relied on raw material and energy imports from the rest of the USSR. The aviation industry that grew up around Tbilisi during and after World War II was completely dependent on factories in other union republics for essential spare parts, and completely dependent on the Soviet military as a monopsonistic consumer. In short, the modalities of integration of Georgia into the Soviet planning structure greatly deepened Georgian economic dependence, and provided ample fodder for nationalists who argued that the relationship between Georgia and the union was essentially exploitative.

More basic ally, although in many indices (e.g. housing, medical care, education) Georgia did as well as or better than the rest of the union, as with many other republics on the southern fringe of the USSR (Dannreuther, 1994), the gap between Georgia and Russia widened during the Soviet era. In the Caucasus as a whole, the standard of living, while increasing in the post-Stalin era, rose less rapidly than that of the Union as a whole, owing to disproportionately high rates of population growth. The growth of total fixed capital in Georgia was the second lowest for any republic in the USSR from 1961-75. Georgian per capita GNP was conspicuously lower than the national average<sup>1</sup>. Georgian indices of real income were

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impose central control on the area in 1991. This again threatened the position of institutionalized Adjarian elites. Interviews in Batumi, August 1992.

<sup>1</sup> In 1970, taking the USSR as a whole at 100, Georgia came in at 66.5.



slightly below the union average<sup>1</sup>. Average annual wages in Georgia also grew more slowly than they did in the union as a whole or in Russia<sup>2</sup>. These results, in other words, provided further economic grist for the nationalist mill<sup>3</sup>.

Fourth was the impact of destalinization. Georgian attitudes on Stalin and Stalinism were ambivalent. On the one hand, they too suffered at the hands of Stalin. On the other, for many Georgians, he was “one of theirs”. Stalin was frequently credited with the protection or restoration of Georgian national symbols, as in 1943 when he restored the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church, extinguished by the tsars in 1928.

The Stalin museum at his birthplace in Gori has operated continuously since the dictator’s death, in stark contrast to the closure of all other such institutions honouring Stalin during the Khrushchev. In the vicinity of Gori, toasts are still drunk to Stalin at festive occasions. In the era of destalinization, Soviet denigration of Stalin was symbolically conflated with Russian oppression of the Georgian nation.<sup>4</sup> The first public manifestation of nationalism occurred in Georgia in mid 1956 in student demonstrations in response to Khrushchev’s speech at the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. The rapid and violent suppression of these demonstrations in turn hardened nationalist opinion against the centre.

The other point to make about destalinization was institutional. The decentralization of power led to increasing control over local

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<sup>1</sup> Taking 1960 as a base of 100, real income for the USSR as a whole in 1978 was 218.2, for Russia 224.3, for the Ukraine 221.6, for Georgia 216.8.

<sup>2</sup> Wages in the union as a whole in 1978 averaged 199% of those in 1960, in Russia 202%, and in Georgia 179%.

<sup>3</sup> The above figures on the relative standing of Georgia were taken from I.S. Koropecy, “Growth and Productivity”, G. Schroeder, “Regional Living Standards”, James Gillula, “The Growth and Structure of Fixed Capital”, and Oleg Zinan, “Transcaucasus”, all in Koropecy and Schroeder, 1981, in particular pp.95, 122, 124-5, 138, 143, and 412. Whatever the objective truth, it is none the less clear from interviews with Georgian political figures, civil servants, and intellectuals from 1991 to 1994 that the prevailing view is that Georgia was continually exploited as a member of the union and that its economy was perhaps fatally distorted by Soviet economic planning.

<sup>4</sup> Suny, 1988, pp. 303-334.

affairs by republican party elites in Georgia as elsewhere in the union. This control was used to consolidate Georgian ethnic primacy in the economic and cultural affairs of the republic, often at the expense of minority nationalities<sup>1</sup>. By the early 1970s, the emergence of Georgian nationalism was of sufficient concern to the central party apparatus that it became one of the principal issues in a purge of the Georgian party apparatus, the other being corruption. In 1972, upon assuming the post of first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Eduard Shevardnadze repeatedly attacked manifestations of national chauvinism among both the Georgian majority and minority populations.

Shevardnadze's centrally inspired attack on the party-economic elite in Georgia again enhanced Georgian elite resentment of Soviet power. His assault on nationalist excess had more serious proximate results. It culminated in a decision to remove reference to Georgian as the sole official language of the republic from the Georgian constitution and to give equal status to Russian and other minority languages. This produced demonstrations in Tbilisi in April 1978. The government reversed its position, reinstating the status of the Georgian language, reflecting its awareness of the depth of nationalist feeling even in this period of unchallenged Soviet power.

The 1970s also witnessed the emergence of organized dissident groups in Georgia. Its origins lay in concern over the treatment of Georgian architectural monuments and over the theft of religious artifacts by individuals linked to the Mzhavanadze patronage network for sale abroad. In 1974, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Merab Kostava and others established a Human Rights Defence Group in Tbilisi, and following the Helsinki Accords, this evolved into a Helsinki Watch Committee. As already noted, however, dissidence in the Georgian (and other non-Russian cases) evinced a substantial nationalist inclination with a corresponding deemphasis on principles of liberal

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<sup>1</sup> Suny (1988, pp. 304-5) illustrates this point by reference to enrollment trends in higher education. By 1969-70, Georgians (67% of the population) comprised 82.6% of students in higher education. At the other end of the spectrum, Armenians (9.7% of the population) made up 3.6% of advanced students.

democracy. Ultimately, the group was suppressed with the arrest of Gamsakhurdia and Kostava in 1977. Its suppression was perceived as a Soviet effort to deny the national aspirations of the Georgian people. The importance of this movement lay in its establishment of a political elite that could, in time, serve as an alternative to the Party during the later period of reform, about which more will be said below.

One final element of the process of de-Stalinization and political development in the post-Stalin era deserves mention. As already noted, Georgia was one of the few republics outside Central Asia in which the proportion of Russians in the population as a whole declined significantly during the Brezhnev years. This was in part a manifestation of the consolidation of authority by Georgian ethnic elites during this period and the growing national exclusiveness of Georgian society mentioned above. Beyond this, it reflected the rise of what Russians have come to call *bytovoi natsionalizm* (everyday nationalism) among Georgians. This enhanced the general sense of unwelcomeness, if not insecurity, on the part of non-Georgian populations, and particularly those (like the Russians) not living in compact communities. In turn, the gradual homogenization, of which everyday nationalism was a part, strengthened the appeal of nationalism for society as a whole.

In sum, the Soviet era strengthened the ethnic preconditions for the emergence of Georgian nationalism in the perestroika era. It also increased popular and elite distrust of the cultural intent of the Soviet center. Finally, it provided a set of concrete grievances to animate nationalist discourse and witnessed the beginning of organized nationalist political activity. Yet at the time of Gorbachev's accession to power, there was no broadly based national movement in Georgia. The Gorbachev era created one.

### *C. Perestroika and Georgian Nationalism*

Three questions need to be addressed in discussing the proximate causes for the rise of majority and minority ethnic nationalism in Georgia. Why did Georgian political elites seize upon ethnic

nationalism as an ideological device? Why did minority elites embrace a parallel nationalist agenda to challenge that of the Georgian majority? Why were majority and minority populations receptive to these appeals?

At least four factors relevant to the Gorbachev period are useful in answering these questions. With regard to mass receptivity, however advantageous or disadvantageous the traditional Georgian economic relationship with the center may have been, it is clear that the contradictory and fitful effort at economic reform in the USSR produced considerable hardship in Georgia, as elsewhere in the USSR. Increasing economic privation appears to increase mass receptivity to revisionist or revolutionary ideologies and to the advocacy of collective violence. There were important perceptual components to this decline in standards of living. In the first place, as elsewhere in the former USSR, Georgians had come to expect a low, but guaranteed standard of living. They were unaccustomed to economic uncertainties common and accepted in free market societies. As a result, they were psychologically unprepared for the ambiguities of the reform economy in the USSR. Moreover, in Georgia as elsewhere, people were promised rapid improvement in the context of economic reform. The economic reform was botched. This disappointed expectations and raised the issue of whether the center was capable of serious economic change. Given the centrally directed character of the Soviet economy, the locus of blame was clear when things went away. Unaccustomed insecurity and disappointed expectations – both attributed to failures in Moscow-favored the politicization of ethnicity.

Economic insecurity was only one component of a broader sociopolitical context of uncertainty, confusion, instability, and frustration. This was particularly uncomfortable for people who were accustomed to order and stability in their political lives. In such uncomfortable conditions, people may be drawn to individuals and groups who provide simple and coherent answers. To put it another way, they were susceptible to populist demagoguery. Such susceptibility was encouraged also by both elite and mass political accul-

turation under Soviet rule. Georgians – and other former Soviet nationalities – were conditioned to expect single definitive answers to political questions and had no experience of the pluralism and ambiguity characteristic of democratic politics.

One should also note the dynamic dimension of evolving political process and its effect on the Georgian perception of their dilemma. The last years of perestroika left many with the impression that the union was collapsing. The logical response to this perception was to develop one's own exit option. In this context, nationalist assertion at the expense of the center built on its own momentum. The farther it went in the union as a whole, the less credible was the option of reformation within the union, and hence the more intense the momentum toward disintegration.

The nationalist agenda of independence was an attractive option in these circumstances. It was credible in terms of the Georgian perception of the problem they faced – the ineffectiveness of the center in the implementation of serious reform. And it provided a simple and comprehensible solution, far more so than the complex, tentative, and often contradictory programs of the center.

The attractiveness of the nationalist agenda is related to a further factor: the credibility of the coercive power of the center. Just as the complex and halfhearted central approach to economic reform drew into question the capacity of the union to sustain the economic wellbeing of the various communities in the USSR, the ambiguous and ineffectual Soviet response to national self-assertion drew into question the will or the capacity of the center to sustain the union. The farther the various republics of the USSR went in successfully asserting themselves in the face of opposition from the center, the deeper this problem of credibility became. This in turn invited still stronger challenges. Elites and publics both sensed that the emperor had no clothes.

Finally, the center was, in the past, quite careful to co-opt indigenous national elites through the party and the nomenklatura. All other things being equal, such elites, being closely associated

with a Soviet system, were likely to be discredited by its demise. In some instances (as in Central Asia and Ukraine)<sup>1</sup>, local elites moved sufficiently quickly to limit their vulnerability by seizing components of the nationalist agenda. The Georgian party elite, like that in the Baltics, failed to do so until rather late in the game. In the context of the transition away from monolithic party rule and the incomplete formation of the political spectrum (a development which had been precluded by the previous emphasis on one-party rule and democratic centralism), the population, when allowed to choose, chose those least tainted, those who had most consistently opposed the Communist system.

*Perestroika* had significant effects on minority elites and populations as well. As has already been suggested, the autonomous republics of Abkhazia and Adjara and the Autonomous Oblast of South Ossetia were creations of Soviet nationality policy, and particularly of Stalin's propensity for diluting the cohesion of the union republics by creating within them subsidiary, jurisdictions along ethnic lines. As these jurisdictions were of questionable legitimacy from the perspective of titular national elites, they depended for their existence on the support of the center. Any weakening of the center and of its resolve to control political processes on the periphery was threatening to these minority jurisdictions and the elites controlling them. The resurgence of titular nationalism was viewed likewise. In these circumstances, it was natural that the reemergence of Georgian nationalism in the context of the decaying credibility of the center would enhance the sense of insecurity among elites in the autonomous zones of Georgia and would encourage efforts to depart from the republic.

Thus far we have accounted for the development of majority nationalism directed primarily against Russia and for the quickening of minority concerns regarding the intentions of the majority. This, however, is a long way from an account of the intensity that the Georgian independence movement assumed in 1989-90.

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<sup>1</sup> On this point see Dannreuther, *Creating New States*, p. 16.

The events of April 1989 in Tbilisi provide one additional catalytic dimension for the deep radicalization of Georgian politics during this period. This disturbance in Tbilisi – and its suppression by the Soviet army, with some thirty deaths and numerous injuries owing to the use of chemical agents – joined the pantheon of episodes of Georgian victimization. There is substantial evidence that the demonstration was constructed in such a way as to induce a violent response on the part of the authorities in the hope that this would galvanize popular support behind the nationalist movement's striving for independence. This is, in fact, exactly what happened. The events were quickly mythologized in Georgian nationalist discourse<sup>1</sup>.

The event was particularly strongly felt because of the political context in which it occurred. It was a period of unambiguous political liberalization in Soviet society. This liberalization appeared to enjoy the support of the central hierarchy itself. The suppression in Tbilisi was not what people expected from such a leadership at such a time. There was a dissonance between the articulated commitment to reform and pluralism and the reality of blood in the streets. This further confused and embittered the populace.

The response of the center to the event was also deeply frustrating and offending. Responsibility was denied by Gorbachev, who disclaimed knowledge and said that the commander exceeded his instructions. The commander claimed that he had acted within his instructions. When complaints about his conduct surfaced in the Supreme Soviet, he was vocally supported by large numbers of Russian deputies. The impression from the television footage of the debate on the subject was that a large portion of the Russian deputies felt that the Georgians deserved what they got. No significant disciplinary action was taken against General Rodionov or

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Givi Pantsuria, Ludmilla Esvandzhia, Eka Eliava, and Roland Dzhalgania, *Deviatoe Aprelya: Dokumental'nye svidetel'stva o tragicheskikh sobytiakh v Tbilisi (April 9: Documentary evidence of tragic events in Tbilisi)* (Tbilisi: Izdatel'stvo Merani, 1990).

his subordinates. Indeed, Rodionov subsequently became Russian defense minister. No apology was forthcoming.

The effect on Georgian perceptions of the center is clear. The political process in Moscow was thoroughly delegitimized. The lack of meaningful response caused the Georgians to internalize the experience and the sense of humiliation and powerlessness associated with it. Although the principal villain in the piece was Moscow, and the principal impetus to Georgian nationalism from the event was anti-Russian, it had spillover effects with consequences for civil peace in Georgia. One saw in the subsequent year an acceleration of efforts at “purification” of Georgia, a growing intolerance of non-Georgian minorities, and an increasing sense of Georgia for the Georgians.

To summarize, the politicization of both minority and majority ethnicity in Georgia was a result of social, political, and cultural changes rooted in the Soviet era. More proximately, it reflects the impact of perestroika on both elite and mass politics during the Gorbachev time. Finally, the dysfunctional Soviet response to mass political activity in Georgia in April 1989 – and the manipulation of these events by the Georgian nationalist movement – deeply radicalized the political agenda among the titular population, with grave consequences not only for Georgian attitudes toward reform of Georgia’s relations with the center, but also for majority-minority relations within the republic itself.

#### *D. Independence*

The chronological development of ethnic conflict in South Ossetia and in Abkhazia has been addressed above. It suffices to note here two points. First is the essential role that the Gamsakhurdia Government played in the initiation of open conflict in South Ossetia and, indirectly, in Abkhazia. Gamsakhurdia came to power committed to a policy of ethnic Georgian primacy in the republic. The isolation of his government from the international community, a product of the latter’s concern about minority rights, contributed to the atmosphere of extremism. This was intrinsically threatening



to minority elites. However, specific policies of the government also played a role in the exacerbation of tension. The appointment of prefects for the regions of Georgia was perceived as an explicit challenge to the authority of minority jurisdictions. The situation was not improved by efforts to reconsecrate mosques as orthodox churches in western Georgia.

The policy adopted by the government toward the activities of the South Ossetian autonomous oblast at the end of 1990 was foolishly confrontational. The attacks on Osset populations outside the South Ossetian oblast caused massive flight and, although these attacks may not have been inspired by the government, they were certainly not prevented. The renewal of Georgian assaults on Tskhinvali after the return of Shevardnadze in the spring of 1992 spoiled what might otherwise have been a promising opportunity for a negotiated resolution of the conflict.

The latter point invites a related observation. Georgians account for the renewal of attacks on Tskhinvali in the spring of 1992 in terms of the weakness of the chain of command after the coup and return of Shevardnadze. It was the latter's incomplete control over the levers of power that allowed local commanders to steal the initiative<sup>1</sup>. This problem recurred elsewhere. The initiation of hostilities in Abkhazia was reportedly the result of a deliberate violation of state policy by one of Shevardnadze's principal subordinates, Tengiz Kitovani. In none of these instances were the perpetrators of these actions effectively disciplined. In short, the weakness of central authority under Shevardnadze and the autonomy enjoyed by other actors – both in government and at the operational level in affected theaters – were major factors in explaining both the initiation of hostilities (in Abkhazia) and their continuation (in South Ossetia).

Loose control and lax discipline also played a role at lower levels. The excesses of the Georgian campaign in Mingrelia in the summer of 1992, for example, resulted from incomplete government

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<sup>1</sup> This explanation is rejected by officials in South Ossetia. Interviews with Southern Osset Information Ministry officials and Supreme Soviet deputies in August 1992.

control of paramilitaries and the manifest inhumanity and corruption of their personnel in the field. The campaign of looting, rape, torture, and murder mounted by “Mkhedrioni” in the region did much to poison relations between Mingrelia and the rest of Georgia. Georgian forces behaved similarly upon their entry into Abkhazia in the summer of 1992<sup>1</sup>. One sympathizes in this context with Aslan Abashidze’s view that the only way he managed to keep the lid on in Adjara was to keep government forces out<sup>2</sup>.

The mention of incomplete government control over forces in the field brings us to the second point – the role of Russia in provoking and sustaining ethnic conflict in the republic. It is facile to accept the position frequently articulated in Georgia that the civil conflicts in the republic are the result of foreign (i.e., Russian) meddling rather than internal conditions. However, just as it is not possible to explain the development of nationalism in post-Soviet Georgia without reference to the politically and socially distorting effects of Soviet rule, so it is hard to account fully for the course of ethnic conflict in the country without reference to Russia’s role.

This issue has both permissive and proactive aspects. In the former category, one should note the obvious inability or unwillingness of Russian authorities to control their own borders and the behavior of their own citizens. Insurrection in South Ossetia was possible because of the uncontrolled border between this region and its northern neighbor – a situation that allowed reasonably free movement of both materiel and volunteers into the conflict zone. Likewise, in Abkhazia, resistance to central authorities was mounted with ample assistance of Cossack and Chechen volunteers, who crossed freely from the North Caucasus. Arguably, these permissive

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<sup>1</sup> For a concise description of the behavior of Georgian military, paramilitary, and civilian personnel toward non-Georgians in Abkhazia after their entry, see Chervonnaya, *Abkhazia*, pp. 149-150.

<sup>2</sup> Interviews in Batumi, 1992. When I asked a Georgian taxi driver in 1993 whether he felt that conflict would spread to Adjara, he responded that of course it would. After all, it was the only place in the country where there was anything left to steal.

factors were the result of the collapse of Russian authority in the region, rather than any deliberate design.

It is reasonably clear in the case of Abkhazia that insurgents benefited from substantial supplies of Russian heavy weaponry. It is difficult to account otherwise for the appearance of an Abkhaz air force in the skies over Sukhumi in the spring of 1993, or for the plenitude of heavy weapons deployed by the Abkhaz in the last weeks of their push against Sukhumi. Here too this may have been the result not of Russian government policy, but of the actions of specific groups in Russia with access to or control over military resources, and willing either to sell them to the Abkhaz or to use them as an instrument in an effort to punish Georgia for its early rejection of Soviet rule or to reclaim this desirable piece of real estate, or both<sup>1</sup>. Alternatively, much of it may have been the result of illegal arms sales or transfers by local Russian commanders seeking either to line their pockets or to feed their troops at a time when the logistical chain back to Russia was not operating.

Certain components of the Abkhaz story, however, cause one to push the interpretation farther. After the cease-fire accord of July 1993, Russian military observers were introduced into the zone of conflict to monitor both sides' implementation of the accord. To judge from the outcome of the renewed offensive in September 1993, they did a much better job of monitoring Georgian compliance than they did of Abkhaz. Moreover, they signed on as a guarantor of the cease-fire, and yet did nothing as the Abkhaz took the

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<sup>1</sup> In the post-Soviet context, control over Abkhazia would have roughly doubled the Russian coastline on the Black Sea at a time when the status of the major former Soviet naval bases in the region (those in Ukraine) was in doubt. There were identifiable factions in both the Russian parliament and in the defense ministry who were publicly sympathetic to Abkhaz aspirations. Chervonnaya concludes an extensive analysis of the causes of the Abkhaz conflict with the more ambitious assertion that its most important proximate cause was interference and manipulation by operatives of the KGB seeking to neutralize Georgia's drive toward independence by stimulating internal conflict. According to Chervonnaya, their behavior changed little subsequent to the collapse of the union, the adjusted intention being to "punish disobedient colonies and to return them to the imperial system". Chervonnaya, *Abkhazia 1992*, pp. 150-151.

offensive and then cleansed the area of its Georgian population. In so doing, they created a situation in which Georgia had no choice but to capitulate to Russian pressure that they join the CIS and legitimize the stationing of Russian forces on Georgian soil, not only as peacekeepers, but in permanent bases<sup>1</sup>. The evidence is admittedly circumstantial, but it points strongly to a deliberate Russian policy of destabilization aimed at a restoration of Georgian dependence and Russian influence. Independent observers, including Russian ones<sup>2</sup>, generally accept that it was a matter of Russian state policy to manipulate Georgia's ethnic conflicts in order to restore Georgia to the fold, and as part of a broader effort to reestablish primacy in the former Soviet region.<sup>3</sup>

1995

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<sup>1</sup> A Russian-Georgian agreement on military cooperation, including provision for twenty-five-year leases on four Russian bases in Georgia, was initialed in March 1995. The agreement was finalized in 1994-95. It still awaits ratification by the Georgian parliament, the delay resulting from what Georgians see as a Russian failure to deliver on their promise to assist in the reestablishment of jurisdiction over its territory. More recently, the fate of the agreement has become entangled in the dispute between Georgia over extension of the CISPKF mandate mentioned above. It is noteworthy that some six years later at the Istanbul summit of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe, the two countries signed an agreement on the withdrawal of Russian troops from several of Georgia's bases.

<sup>2</sup> See Chervonnaya, Abkhazia 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Editor's note: The article "Ethnic Conflicts in Georgia" was originally written in 1995. The authors of the paper were George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi and S. Neil MacFarlane, Queen's University. The work was based on the field work and interviews conducted in Georgia during 1993-1994 years. Later, in 2002 the original article was re-edited and published in the "Ethnic Conflict, Religion, Identity, and Politics", 2002, Ed. S.A.Giannokos. We are publishing the initial, original version of the work based on the original source kept in the archive of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN).

THE DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT:  
Georgia and the Post-Soviet Caucasus

George Khutsishvili, Ph.D.

Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation

1995

Geopolitical, historical, and cultural background of the Caucasus gave rise to ethnic psychologies that prevent people from building a more or less adequate self-concept and self-image. This should inevitably have aggravated conflict perception in these peoples and thus, conflict settlement too. Each side tends to see themselves as more tolerant than the other, despite their alleged right (reference made to history) to decide inter-ethnic problems unilaterally.

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Georgia, July, 1995.

## THE DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT: GEORGIA AND THE POST-SOVIET CAUCASUS

### THE POST-SOVIET LEGACY

The Soviet legacy which has resulted in deeply rooted irrational mind-style of most of post-Soviet communities (with the exception of distinctly European-styled Baltics, and distinctly Asian-styled Central Asians) dichotomizes the main transition problem to the two traditional questions of Russian populist intellectualism: who is to blame for all, and what is to be done (once and for all). The answer to the first question was found pretty quickly. Towards the end of perestroika that has questioned seven decades of the Soviet rule, Lenin and Stalin looked like the sole malefactors. It took only a few more years for many to reverse their decision of who was to blame for all the calamities that have followed the modern revolution: Mikhail Gorbachev, of course, who has liberalized (and thus, destabilized) the Regime, opened the way for the former dissidents to stir up masses of people, fostered collapse of the Empire, and let go of Eastern Europe.

The crisis and unclear prospect are pushing towards a retrograde answer to the second sacramental question (“What is to be done?”): thus, a visible revival of communist and socialist parties, and a nostalgia for the Soviet life-style with its low prices and a minimum of social guarantees. Unexpectedly, Georgia in 1995 elections faces the same problem as Russia: clearest communists versus obscure freemarketists, against the background of disappointed and nihilistic masses of voters. Stuff like national idea or even national primacy can no more impress or direct people minds and their decision-making process.

1995

It is impossible to explain the powerful rise, and subsequent fail of nationalist movements in the pre-disintegrated Union that have mostly shaped the post-Soviet reality outside Russia, unless we accept that they had covertly and tacitly developed during the whole Soviet era. As soon as the people suddenly saw the collapsibility of the Regime, the earlier conformist, neutral and loyal majority in the national communities had immediately took to the identity-enhancing nationalist philosophy and assumed their new role in the general process of demolition of the empire.

But as soon as a growing isolationism of the new nationalist leaders in the Republics had aggravated old and created new socio-economic problems causing hardships for the population, the sane majority had allowed the opposition to remove much revered worshipped nationalist leaders in favor of the former communist rulers: this has happened in a civilized form in Lithuania, and in a harsher form in Georgia and Azerbaijan. The only striking counter-example is Chechnya. Practically speaking, it is not the point how nationalistic post-Soviet societies really are, but how demoralized and disintegrated they are and how unpredictably they may turn towards making extreme zigzags their political likes and dislikes.

### **COULD IT ALL DEVELOP DIFFERENTLY?**

And yet, could the process of obtaining independence by the former Soviet republics be more successful politically and less di-

sastrous by its outcomes for the people? As it turns out, ethnic nationalism was the only force on the political palette of both the Baltics and the Caucasus (the foremost regions in their anti-Sovietism; only the Baltics were more fortunate with the West's commitment to back them up) which politically active sections of society had dignified. Totalitarian rule could produce nothing recognizable but its own disguised and distorted reflections in the social consciousness. Democratically minded and oriented movements and parties in the republics had lacked the fervor and rancor to meet the mass expectations. Their revival and takeover, however essential for the Caucasus' future, may take decades in this tormented piece of land on the globe.

### **FACETS OF CONFLICT IN GEORGIA**

Republic of Georgia, looking like a tiny spot on the post-Soviet political map, had repeatedly attracted international attention due to two circumstances: almost permanent turmoil since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the leadership of former Soviet Foreign Minister and Mikhail Gorbachev's principal confederate Eduard Shevardnadze (with a year-long period of bizarre ethno-nationalist rule of Zviad Gamsakhurdia in between).

It would be unfair not to notice a visible stabilization in Georgia after it has entered CIS, accepted Russian military presence and the political supervision of the country. Yet, in view of the unsolved problems of breakaway regions like Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and growing tension in southern Armenian populated settlements, this may just be the lull before the storm. At the first visible signs that Abkhazia and South Ossetia might move towards acceptance of Georgian jurisdiction, the existing inter-ethnic tension in Southern-Georgian Ninotsminda (bordering Armenia) and Akhalkalaki (bordering Turkey) regions may be easily manipulated into a full-scale violent conflict.

The ruined Georgian economy has been no less a factor of frustration in society. Even now foreign investments remain a remote

prospect. The whole annual budget of Georgia (as of 1995) is two hundred million dollars (more than half of it patched up by the Western humanitarian aid), and the debt to Turkmenistan alone for the natural gas supply (cut almost completely in December 1994) exceeds five hundred million dollars. More than 50% of enterprises are still at a halt.

The economic dimension includes the gap between standards of living in town and in country. Tbilisi is usually terribly overcrowded in winter when the city has to host nearly 90% of the entire population of Georgia. In addition to these “seasonal economic refugees”, real refugees are also more and more inclined to settle in Tbilisi that gives more options to succeed, not just survive. Since Georgia turned into one of the major seller’s markets for Turkish goods that become stale or are expiring, more and more Georgians (especially younger ones) prefer to get involved in semilegal trade/smuggle operations rather than pursue traditionally respected occupations.

People are gradually getting used to the existence of breakaway territories. Artificial, emotionally charged politicization of the Georgian society in Gamsakhurdia times has swung to another extreme: Georgians now appear mostly apolitical, right to the rising suspicions that the next elections (most crucial for the country’s future) may fail. Individualism, always typical in Georgians, has acquired a tint of indifference. People have adapted to the new realities. Some of those who used to mourn the times when they suntanned on the Abkhazia beaches, now enjoy themselves in places like Antalia (Turkish Mediterranean resort), while the poorer people suffice with less costly pleasures.

Yet, if you ask “a man in the street” in Georgia what is the number one problem to be settled before the country can recover, you will most probably hear Abkhazia, not the economy mentioned.

The protracted conflict with the secessionist leadership of self-proclaimed Republic of Abkhazia has been marked with a remarkable degree of ethnic hatred in Abkhazians (c. 80,000 before



the crisis) against Georgians which does not decline even after c. 250,000 ethnic Georgians have been expelled from Abkhazia.

There has been an animated discussion in the parliament and government, in the media and at the community level in Georgia on the possibility of federalist solution to the territorial integrity problem. The Georgian society proved generally unprepared for multiculturalist and federalist approaches to the problem: although there have not been credible polls on the subject, most people see federalism as the way to disintegrate the country through legalization and encouragement of the minority claims for growing autonomization and, prospectively, secession. The underlying fears of the Georgian population pertain to the expected long-term instability and weakness of the state structures, their inability to secure state borders and law enforcement in minority populated areas, to regulate inter-ethnic relations, and to provide a strong foreign policy. In view of the situation in the conflict zones and given the same fears, a unitary model of state still looks to most people like a consolidating solution, which clearly shows how fragmented and inconsistent is the social consciousness in Georgia.

There is an evident difference between the Abkhazian and South-Ossetian problems: one represents a legal deadlock complicated by a considerable intolerance and possible renewal of the armed clashes, while the other conflict looks fatigued and ripe for conciliatory efforts. Solution to the Abkhazian problem is mainly hindered by the non-compromising position of Abkhaz leadership, while a major obstacle to the solution of Ossetian one is the fear on Georgian side before the consequences of restoration of the abolished Oblast.

The recently adopted Georgian Constitution vaguely defines the question of administrative-territorial structure of the country: an obvious retreat before the common opinion in view of the approaching elections. At the same time, Shevardnadze had to take tougher tone when talking about the breakaway Abkhazia, and about the acceptable means of getting it back into the Georgian

state. A discouraging moment is that people grow frustrated as they fail to see a realistic way to a constructive solution.

### A KEYNOTE PROBLEM

It is a general tendency in collapsing empires that ethnic groups get a renewed impulse for independence and self-realization. Mutual consistency of the principles of self-determination of the nations, and of inviolability of the existing international borders has risen to a global problem since the decline of the USSR started in late '80s.

Eduard Shevardnadze has repeatedly remarked that the destiny of Georgia was being decided in Abkhazia, and he is right. This ancient and fertile land had for centuries hosted various ethnic groups, of which Abkhazs and Georgians have both been indigenous ones. The traditionally tolerant relations (proven by numerous mixed marriages) hid at the same time a sparkle of fire that in a few last years managed to incite in Abkhazs an incredible degree of anti-Georgian hatred, comparable to the sentiments manifest in Bosnia (a decisive role in provoking this process was played by the nationalist "Georgia for Georgians" hysteria launched by the Zviadists).

Russian factor played the most important role among the external influences. Retrograde forces in Russia have concentrated on fostering the pro-Communist secessionist leadership of this break-away Black Sea province, not least in view of the complicated relationships with Ukraine. The prospect of losing control over large portions of the Black Sea coast, along with the strategic seaports, traditional lifelines to the Caucasian and Central-Asian republics, was materializing at the stormy sessions of Ukrainian and Georgian parliaments. Here we come to the point where the legal aspect has played a dubious role in development of the problem.

The whole Georgian-Abkhazian conflict is tied up to a remarkable legal situation, maybe an unprecedented one, which can be qualified as "the Abkhazian Paradox". In the multiethnic Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia which was in 1992-1993 fighting for independence from the multiethnic Republic of Georgia, Abkhazs

made roughly 17% of the whole population, while Georgians were 46%, along with other considerable ethnic groups, like Russians, Armenians or Greeks, present in the area. In case of open and democratic elections Abkhaz were not guaranteed to make majority in the local parliament and other ruling bodies. To mitigate the growing conflict, Gamsakhurdia's government insured by special decree the Abkhaz majority in the parliament of Abkhazia, regardless of the outcome of elections. Even that did not seem sufficient to Vladislav Ardzinba's pro-Communist ruling group. The answer was found in ensuring the Abkhaz ethnic majority in Abkhazia by ethnic cleansing and forceable displacement of people.

The Abkhaz elite likes to stress that they have been fighting for the recognition of their national identity as distinct from Georgian. There is a growing understanding in Georgian society that Abkhazians should be treated as ethnically distinct from Georgians. What is hardly believable is that the sense of historical belonging or identity could foster violence towards and intolerance of a neighboring nation. It looks more like a fear of responsibility or of loss of profits, or the ingroup obligations that might create this phenomenon. And even this cannot possibly explain all.

In order to theoretically ground and back up their fight for independence, the Abkhaz ideologists have created a popular version of the history of the region, and of the Georgian/Abkhaz relationships in the past century, according to which Georgians had methodically suppressed and assimilated the Abkhaz ethnos until it became a minority on its own land. Stalin and, particularly, Beria were accused, usually in unsubstantiated manner, of deliberately enforcing various forms of assimilation like mixed marriages or change of the last name, right to the deportation of Abkhazs that would finally lead to the mono-ethnic Georgian Abkhazia or, at least, Georgians' full domination in Abkhazia. It is widely known, at the same time, and has not been subject to dispute in any serious sources, that Stalin and Beria made no privileges for their native Georgia. They were most active in promoting the Russian-styled internationalism and in physically exterminating nationalist intelligentsia in all republics

(according to the Leninist doctrine, nations were doomed to die off anyway, yielding place to “more progressive” super-ethnic entities, and it would make no sense to see Stalin as consciously preparing ground for Yeltsin).

### THE BURDEN OF TRADITION

Geopolitical, historical and cultural background of the Caucasus gave rise to ethnic psychologies that prevent people from building a more or less adequate self-concept and self-image. This should inevitably have aggravated conflict perception in these peoples, and thus, conflict settlement too. Each side tends to see themselves as more tolerant than the other, despite their alleged right (reference made to history) to decide inter-ethnic problems unilaterally.

The whole post-Soviet transition, and especially the war in Chechnya have highlighted distinctive features of all the Caucasus-type conflicts: mythologized national ambition of most of the Caucasus peoples (David vs Goliath syndrome) degenerating into self-victimization, combined with the acute sense of autonomy degenerating into an ethnic based isolationism. The fears of forced re-integration that have lessened with the growth of frustration, weariness and the centrifugal tendencies within Russia itself, are on the rise again.

Along with the inevitable post-totalitarian transition problems, this includes the role of ethnic psychologies and national cultures, especially traditions like the Caucasus code of dignity. Without this analysis, the Chechen perseverance in war can be easily explained away as a fundamentalist fanaticism, and their struggle would look like just a senseless and counterproductive rebellion. However, many in the West seem to believe in the Russian version of the situation in North Caucasus, according to which Russia in the Chechen crisis acts as a civilizational shield against the advancing Muslim fundamentalism.

On the other hand, conflicts in the Caucasus cannot be understood if we do not consider them within the framework of global

tendencies that strongly showed in recent decades. Ubiquitous attributes of today's major pattern of instability and insecurity in the world include:

(i) Decisive role of the issue of ethnicity in regional conflicts, emergence and growth of inter-ethnic barriers;

(ii) Spontaneous and uncontrollable growth of violence in all the conflicts related to the ethnic issues;

(iii) Self-reproduction of the patterns of instability and violence in seemingly inexplicable sequence and way, their chain-reaction development;

(iv) Fragmentation of reality and general failure of basic natural/traditional deterrents in dealing with inter-ethnic violence.

Caucasia represents a unique example of internalized civilizational fault-line, to use Samuel Huntington's terminology. In order to understand motivation, constituent and fostering factors and rigidity of ethnic hatred in the Abkhaz, self-isolationism in Chechens, and self-victimization throughout Caucasia, the Caucasus phenomenon should be investigated on the basis of systems approach, as a unique yet highly instructive subset of socio-cultural conditions.

The traditional ethnic clashes and wars of previous ages took place in relevant environments, and the roots of their violence were at least understandable within the framework of relevant scales of values. Modern ethnic violence is taking place in an a new and different cultural environment which regards them as intolerable. Yet any efforts to penetrate into the internal mechanisms of ethnic violence and hatred-forming process have so far proven fruitless.

What would happen if this process is just left unattended? Can it not remain localized within the territories and nations unable to manage it towards a peaceful solution and, therefore, have to go through the bloodiest scenarios to finally survive or perish? Is all this, after all, really dangerous for the future of the rest of the world? The obvious yet insufficient answer would be that too many of the existing regional conflicts in the world which have already claimed tens of thousands of lives and produced millions of refugees

and forcibly displaced persons (over a million in the Republic of Azerbaijan alone!) have rapidly internationalized, creating security problems far beyond their original borders.

### RUSSIA'S IDENTITY PROBLEM IN THE CAUCASIAN CONTEXT

The West's attention has been so far preoccupied by supporting and speeding up the conversion of Russian military nuclear industry. However, the major conversion for post-Soviet Russia is the conversion from ideologically substantiated role of a supervisor of other nations (and, prospectively, the whole world) to that of a rising nation-state. Other newly independent, or newly liberated states of the former U.S.S.R. are subject to the same process, and everywhere the problem of identity that seemed to have been a priori solved, turns out to be the most painful. For Russia it is twice as painful, as it really boils down to the problem of "paternity identification": do Russians want to see themselves as descending from Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, or Lenin-Stalin (the latter inseparable in what they have accomplished as one political self).

Disruption in the Russian identity was planted by the Bolsheviks at the dawn of Soviet era. It was maintained with help of compensatory references to the global mission of Soviet Russia as opening the new era, its "international duty" of a pioneer of Socialism in the world, the ever besieged and endangered bastion of "peace and friendship between nations". Psychologically, this was the further exploitation of the fatalistic patterns of martyrdom rooted deeply in the traditions of the Russian messianism.

Due to one of the paradoxical effects of the Soviet regime he Russians have developed an inclusive and dynamic understanding of their own national identity, open for anyone ready to merge in it. The proviso was the Russian orientation in language/culture/self-perception combined with the compliance with expansively understood great statehood (*derzhava*) under the "elder brother's" guidance. From this viewpoint not only Slavic and Orthodox Ukrainians or Byelorussians, but also much more remote Abkhazs and

Yakuts were viewed as potential Russians, naturally and consciously maturing into the “elder-brotherhood”. Among more complicated cases were Georgians and the Baltics, but it seemed only a matter of time for them to merge in the same powerful stream.

The major reward for everyone complying with the System was freedom from responsibility transferred automatically to the state (one of the most characteristic features of totalitarian mentality). The collapse of the Soviet empire has put every element of the vast social structure before the necessity to make unbacked-up decisions, develop consistency and assume responsibility for their own actions. But flexibility in mentality has survived in all post-Soviet communities and organizations, and could not avoid the sphere -of politics. One of the advantages of post-Soviet Russian policy-making is a skillful de-authorization of dubious actions, as it happened in conflict-stricken areas of Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, or more recently, in Bosnia. Accordingly, it has delayed and complicated the international reaction to Russia’s expansive strategies and maintenance of intensity in ethno-political conflicts via alternate covert support of the conflicting parties (like it was evident in Nagorno-Karabakh).

In case of Russia you never really know who you are appealing to or protesting against, and who or how is going to react. The wide-spread and, largely, escapist pattern of thinking in the West has been successful in creating a binary approach to the post-Soviet Russia: there are reformist democrats led by Boris Yeltsin, and there is also a broad anti-Yeltsin and anti-reformist opposition forming the pro-Communist and (lately) national-patriotic coalition. The former party is often identified with the democratically oriented post-Soviet Russian statehood, in which any negative disruptions are attributed to the activities of the latter party. At the same time, in the Russian society we see a profound devaluation of the domestic idea of democracy, and hardly any political figure is perceived as democratic or uncorrupted. This moral crisis is likely to be resolved only in the rise of “a new Russian imperialism” based on nationalism and great-power chauvinism.

Too much of the discrepancy in Russian “near” and “faraway” foreign strategies is usually explained away in the West as resulting from the lack of control of the Yeltsin administration over the parliament, government, the military, economy, political parties, whatever. But how can the actions be explained so obviously contradicting, and so detrimental to the normally understood strategic goals and national interests of the country, like the war in Chechnya, or an open confrontation with NATO in understanding the European security concept?

### **RUSSIAN FACTOR: CHANCES OF STABILIZATION**

Realistic assessment of Russia’s chances to stabilize in its democratic orientation can be gleaned from the analysis of Russia’s current strategies towards the newly independent states, especially the Transcaucasus countries. This analysis has already shown:

1. Relative democratic stabilization and progress in market economy reforms in Russia during 1994 became largely possible due to the pressure from G-7 and its global financial institutions. Getting credits from the West necessary to overcome the economic crisis was directly linked with creating image of Russia in the whole world as a country committed to democratic transition, oriented towards peaceful resolution of conflicts, willing and able to provide assistance and secure peacekeeping and rescue operations in the countries of so-called “near abroad”.

2. At the same time Russia revealed its strategic goals in the “near abroad” and former Communist Eastern Europe by reluctance to admit its involvement in the Abkhazia conflict, and to adequately qualify the outcomes of this conflict.

3. There is an overwhelming evidence indicating manipulation of the factors involved in the structure and development of ethnic and political conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan, manifest in all major ethnopolitical conflicts in FSU, and features distinguishing them from conflicts outside FSU (cf. Svetlana Chervonnaya’s book - *Abkhazia: Postkommunisticheskaya Vandeya*, recently translated



into English and published in London as *Conflict in the Caucasus*). Self-sustainability of conflict has been achieved in the Azeri-Armenian dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Trans-Dniester in Moldova, Crimea in Ukraine, purposefully hindering consolidation, economic and political stabilization of non-Russian post-communist states.

4. Conspiratorial mindsets, implanted in mass psychology by the Soviet ideology and propaganda, are fostered and strengthened in the post-Soviet space. They are purposefully exploited by nationalist movements and new political leaders of seemingly incompatible orientations, contributing to the general feeling of insecurity and latent unrest.

5. Democratic stabilization of the entire post-communist space depends on purposeful and consistent efforts from international community combined with progressive forces in Russia and the rest of FSU in order to ensure their stable movement towards open and civic society, inter-ethnic tolerance and economic rise.

# Shevardnadze set to rule over the divided

# 1995

The Interview with George Khutsishvili by Lawrence Sheets, Reuter Tbilisi, published in Eastern Express, Singapore Daily Newspaper, 1<sup>st</sup> of November, 1995.

## SHEVARDNADZE SET TO RULE OVER THE DIVIDED

### EASTERN EXPRESS GEORGIA

It is nearly a thousand years since Georgia's legendary King David the Builder first united bickering princedoms under one rule.

Eduard Shevardnadze, who is a strong favourite to win the recreated post of president in the mountainous republic's November 5 election, faces a similar task.

Shevardnadze's government, in which as chairman of the ruling council he is already effectively the head of state, has no control over the two separatist regions which make up about a fifth of the former Soviet republic's territory.

By far the most serious problem born in Georgia's four years of independence is in the Black Sea province of Abkhazia where separatist fighters drove out government troops in 1993 after a year-long-war in which thousands of people were killed.

"It will be very difficult for Shevardnadze to solve this problem no matter what he does. Right now things have reached a dead end",

George Khutsishvili, the director of Georgia's International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, said.

Khutsishvili said that for Shevardnadze, 66, to secure a positive place in Georgian history, he needs to get back Abkhazia, which he is widely blamed for losing.

The setback was the biggest for the white-haired leader in his 10-year political career. He had gone to the region to rally his soldiers in the face of a lightning assault by the rebels on the regional capital, Sukhumi.

The charred Council of Ministers building still stands in the centre of the once care-free resort town, testament to his forces' futile last stand. Shevardnadze escaped, although his plane was fired on by rebels as he fled.

It is widely accepted that the minority Abkhaz received arms and training from Russia at a time when Shevardnadze's relations with Moscow were at an ebb.

Although Shevardnadze agreed to accept Russian military bases in exchange for help in reasserting control over the province, communist and nationalist groups in Moscow tend to sympathise with the Abkhaz.

"The Abkhaz would have little reason to find common ground with Georgia if the communists are in power in Moscow", Khutsishvili said. Russia's Communist Party is a front-runner in December parliamentary elections.

Russia has proven a less than reliable ally on other fronts.

It has not produced the former security chief, Igor Giorgadze, who is hiding in Russia and wanted by Georgia for allegedly masterminding a bomb attack on Shevardnadze on August 29. Shevardnadze escaped with facial cuts.

Georgian officials say Giorgadze, a 20-year veteran of the Soviet KGB police, was acting on the orders of highly-placed hardliners in Russia who hate Shevardnadze for playing a key role in dismantling

the Soviet empire and want to see a pro-Moscow puppet regime in his place.

“It is doubtful that the Russians will ever hand over Giorgadze. Relations will continue to be complicated because Shevardnadze is still seen in Moscow as being too oriented towards the West,” Khutsishvili said.

Shevardnadze faces another separatist problem in South Ossetia, a northern region of 75,000 whose ethnic minority want in unite with kinfolk in Russia’s republic of North Ossetia.

The conflict, which claimed 1,000 lives in 1991-92, has lately shown signs of being resolved.

For the Ossetians to agree to become part of Georgia again, Shevardnadze, might have to grant the region the status of an autonomous republic, which would anger nationalists in Tbilisi.

To add to his woes, Shevardnadze has to deal with an autonomous government in the mostly Muslim southwest region of Adjara which has cordial relations with Tbilisi but pays little heed to its laws or directives.

Along Georgia’s southern border the other potential points with local Armenian and Azeri populations.

INGROUP PSYCHOLOGY OF POST-TOTALITARIAN COMMUNITIES:  
THE CASE OF GEORGIA

1995

by Dr George Khutsishvili, Director, ICCN, Tbilisi, 1996

*The Georgian Fault Line*

The Georgian case is remarkable among post-Soviet states, for even in the Soviet times this nation was perceived among the union republics least affected by the official ideology and its imposed worldview. Georgia, along with the Baltic nations, is known to have pioneered demolition of the Empire. Also, Georgians' cultural image had always been perceived in the USSR as more sophisticated than that of, say, Soviet Central-Asians. However, in some sinuous way this must have also caused the Georgian way to independence to turn out immeasurably more painful and complicated than that of the Baltics, and Georgians have been facing a severest intra-ethnic conflict Central-Asian nations would never dream of. To a large extent, this may be clarified by taking into

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**THE GEORGIAN FAULT LINE**

The Georgian case is remarkable among post-Soviet states, for even in the Soviet times this nation was perceived among the union republics least affected by the official ideology and its imposed worldview. Georgia, along with the Baltic nations, is known to have pioneered demolition of the Empire. Also, Georgians' cultural image had always been perceived in the USSR as more sophisticated than that of, say, Soviet Central-Asians. However, in some sinuous way this must have also caused the Georgian way to independence to turn out immeasurably more painful and complicated than that of the Baltics, and Georgians have been facing a severest intra-ethnic conflict Central-Asian nations would never dream of. To a large extent, this may be clarified by taking into consideration both general tendencies of classic and modern nationalism (Gellner 1987; Green-

feld 1992), and the specificities of Georgian post-Soviet nationalism (Khutsishvili & MacFarlane 1995).

The existing unrecoverable incompatibility between large sections of Georgian society suggests of existence of the Myth (Legend) and the Plot (Conspiracy), the archetype-based collective unconscious images determining the existing Self vs Other in most Georgians. From mid 1994 the nation is slowly recovering after two powerful swings of post-Soviet political pendulum: outwards to the extreme nationalist rule of Zviad Gamsakhurdia (1990-91), with post-nationalist pseudo-parliamentarist rule (1992-93) under Eduard Shevardnadze's formal leadership, and backwards to membership in CIS and renewed Russian influence in Georgia (from 1994). However, the conspiratorial and mythical world perception is dangerously persisting in great part of the nation<sup>1</sup>.

I should stress that the whole following analysis pertains only to a numerous though (unspecifiably) restricted part of Georgian society. It may also be instrumental in revealing the nature of post-totalitarian mentalities outside Caucasia and the entire Former Soviet Union. Significance of the Georgian case is enhanced by its marginal position in post-Soviet context, and its geopolitical location at the civilizational fault line, along which, according to Samuel Huntington's model, the future pattern of conflict is likely to develop (Huntington 1993). Remarkably, we see in modern Georgian psychology an internalized civilizational fault line, a micro-scale incompatibility of inner universes of personalities and groups outwardly very similar to each other in culture and attitudes.

Main attributes of the Plot in Georgians are its globality, globality-locality feedback, ubiquity and equifinality. The significant moment is that the System pertaining to the Plot (aliases: Center, Controller, Mafia) should embrace the whole of the perceivable inhabited world, extend to its very borders. Remarkably, in post-Soviet Georgian perception it rarely extends to extraterrestrial civilizations

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<sup>1</sup> Professor S. Neil MacFarlane told me recently that, among all post-Soviet conspiratorial mindsets, Georgian strikes him as the most powerful one.

(an extremely popular issue in not so remote Soviet times), which indicates (i) the overtly politicized perception of reality against scientific escapist perceptions of the Soviet times, and (ii) obvious decrease of parascientific and mystical (including religious and pseudoreligious) components in ethnocultural and sociocultural life. So, for Georgians, as for many other post-Soviets, the Plot is essentially understood as a global political agenda carried out by some insuperable covertly operating group, aimed to bring into submission, exploit and brainwash primarily smaller nations and weaker individuals, and, through conquering new markets, to gradually expand its realm until it embraces the whole world.

Conspiracy-based worldviews are deeply rooted in Soviet totalitarian mentality. Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism had created a powerful mythical pattern in viewing socialism vs capitalism as mankind's final battle to escape from enslaving temptations of market economy. The all-privatizing spirit of private property had been identified in the Soviet-styled world outlook, politically and economically, with the U.S.A. and, ideologically, with American Jewish billionaires and their lobby on the Hill. This fitted well into Russians' Jungian projective mechanisms, as they had hardly ever experienced anything other than totalitarian nation-state in their entire history, and Jews had been a traditional scapegoat in Russia. Yet it would be oversimplification to call this myth a specifically Russian phenomenon.

In my younger years I came across a remarkable book by a Nesta Webster published in late 19<sup>th</sup> century in England, about the global plot aimed to put the entire world under Jewish control. The whole Jewish nation was pictured in that book as tacitly and meticulously fulfilling its secret mission. Before any other, my immediate instinctive question was somehow a purely technical one: how could the author think it possible to expect from millions of humans scattered all around the world to act like uniformly programmed machines?

Unlike Russians, most modern Georgians do not believe in a specifically Jewish plot, but many of them believe in a global plot "X" alright, and once you express your doubts in its globality and ubiquity (as well as in current identification of the X; see about it

below), you immediately are outgroup. However, the Georgian conspiratorial perceptions differ in many features from, say, America's current perception in Arabs, or even some Americans' perception of America as exposed in "underground" periodicals like *The Vermont Pilgrim* (or, for more academic flavor, see Larry Abraham's *Call it Conspiracy*, Seattle, Washington: Double A Publications, 1985).

## THE PLOT

Being introduced to someone new in Georgia, you often meet an intense gaze, cautious attitude, even reluctance to say a hearty hello, very unlikely for a traditional Georgian manner. Then comes a story highlighting latest revelations in "Iberia Spectre"<sup>1</sup>, and you know: you are being tested. Slightest scepticism in your reaction, or just irony in your eyes will be enough for this person to avoid you thereafter like a snake.

Revelations in question are, as a rule, those re-enforcing globality and structural rigidity of the Plot, providing the "evidence" of participation of current "public enemies" in selling Georgia out to Russia, and further outwards. Anti-American motive is cautiously gaining foothold in the exposition of events, extending to picturing Russia as America's tool who finally has to cooperate with ubiquitous U.S. in manipulating the CIS towards hidden global agendas. The U.S., in its turn, must be an instrument in some globally operating secret communities' hands. The Center of the Plot should, of course, stay obscure and undefinable. Masonic version of the Plot is very popular in more sophisticated circles of Georgian society: masonry is appealing as an amorphous and mysterious idea of omerta-based, hierarchy-consolidated and intrusive community. Shevardnadze, of course, is a mason, as was Gorbachev with his mysterious omen on the skull. Shevardnadze has always been an agent of the Empire of Evil. Fostered by the Komsomol and Communist Party, he was

<sup>1</sup> The most popular oppositionary newspaper in Georgia, and Zviadists' banner. Its circulation had been several times arrested by Georgian authorities for materials insulting to the government and head of state.



commissioned by the KGB, a final string-puller (Gorbachev, although a larger-scale operating Agent, was a secondary decision-maker in the Soviet System) to Soviet Foreign Minister, primarily to secure Russian domination in Georgia and the Caucasus region. Jewish version of the Plot, as already mentioned, is unpopular in Georgia, unlike Russia where Zionism together with American imperialism (traditional brimstones of the Soviet propaganda) are, via their agent Yeltsin, stably moving the country towards total destruction.

The fervor with which some Georgian housewives or school-teachers, despite all the hardships of their lives, indulge in Hercule Poirot-styled unleashings of global plots, is amazing. Characteristics of the Georgian conspiratorial mindset include a forced link between globality and locality of the Plot. Its external boundaries should stretch out to the very limits of the inhabited world, and should at the same time be meaningfully intertwined with the structure of Georgian Legend.

It would be more correct to speak about multiple and functional character of globalisms of the Plot: the mindset switches to another ad hoc design and identification of Central forces, whenever previous ones lose or lack their ingroup significance, but maintains self-sustainability as such, and is never given up essentially. E.g., as soon as the Russian issue had been partly faded out by the accomplished fact of Georgia's membership in CIS, and the Russian peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia, the Center of the Plot started again to shift to "good old" U.S.A. From this viewpoint, America is doing exactly the same in Haiti what Russia has been doing in Abkhazia, or Chechnia. Developments in Russia have had a much stronger outcome in conspiracy-stricken Russians: the Russian Myth fostered during the communist rule, has interpreted the whole post-cold-war transition as a national tragedy, and gave rise to the growing anti-Western, and particularly, anti-American sentiment.

Equifinality of the Plot means that whatever the starting or intermediate conditions and factors, the result is predetermined: Mafia already rules the world, playing democracy with some Western communities, and unceremoniously exploiting the rest of the world.

Demolition of Communism meant, in many Russians' eyes, termination of the last historic attempt to break through the Satanic pattern of world order, and in many Georgians' eyes, surrender of the Russian monster before the American one in their fight for world domination.

Former Soviet diplomat Victor Israelian recalls in April 22 (a sinister date<sup>1</sup>), 1994 issue of *The Christian Science Monitor* George Bush was confident back in 1984 that the next Soviet leader was going to be Gorbachev. Modern Russian nationalist-patriots, of course, interpreted this as another evidence that Gorby was a U.S. implemented agent, and collapse of the Soviet Union was a successful CIA operation. As recently as September 10, 1994 Yeltsin's main adversary Alexander Rutskoi in Russian TV program "Vzglyad" called "what happened to the Soviet Union and to Russia" the "conspiracy of world powers" (in Soviet-styled language meaning U.S.), and said if he knew it would end like that he would not be with the defenders of the Russian "White House" in August 1991, but entirely with the putschists.

Getting back to Georgia, there is also a "universe within a universe" pattern in the Plot structure. Namely, the post-Soviet Russia is perceived by many as a closed realm of evil and domination focused on the part of the world called "near abroad", while the U.S. is a somewhat weakened yet persisting Center (or central conductor) of world domination, naturally sympathizing with its "soul brother" Russian imperialism, rather than with its Victims. Conspiracy-affected minds are apt to see masonic influence even in generous humanitarian aid for Georgia, made on behalf of Shevardnadze.

There must be a relief, and maybe also a sinister delight in picturing the no-option frozen world, the scene of a lost historic battle for freedom and democracy. Besides rivalry-based cold-war-styled mindsets, the fatalistic equifinality of the Plot (a kind of political

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<sup>1</sup> April 22 is Lenin's birthday, and Hitler's birthday is only two days away, which, both from astrological and conspiratorial perspectives, cannot be a mere coincidence.

Thanatos) has in particular case of Georgians been linked with distinctive features of the Georgian Myth.

### THE MYTH

Aldous Huxley, in his analysis of normality and misperception, refers to “*Journal d’une Schizophrene*”, by M.A. Sechehaye, Paris, 1950 (later screened), where we meet a peculiar sense of “horror infiniti”: for Renee (a schizophrenic), it was a revelation of what she called “the System”, a vast cosmic mechanism which exists only to grind out guilt and punishment, solitude and unreality (Huxley 1979, p.107). She called her own world “*le Pais d’Eclairment*”: “the country of lit-upness”. Of course, both worlds were really her own, but the former one was perceived as imposed, pressing, devastating, something that should not exist, like a nightmare, yet impowered to kill the light and reality. Huxley did not think of applying his analysis of singularity of human “island-universe” to totalitarian mentality, or conflict related post-traumatic stress disorders. Yet, even from the philosophical viewpoint, human mind, to paraphrase Leibniz, is more likely to resemble a monad that is compelled to produce its own world, as it has no windows to reflect the external world.

GPU, NKVD, MGB, and finally, KGB had been an ultimate identification of the System in the Soviet mentality. Ubiquity of the KGB was such an obsession for then a dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia that he saw a KGB agent practically in everyone but himself. Unbalanced person himself, he intuitively managed to find rapport with unbalanced post-totalitarian masses of people, manipulating their sentiment towards a Conspiracy-conditioned worldview. Almost entire nation, including families, split in 1990-91 into ideologically testable “true” and “untrue” Georgians, and the entire Soviet-time intellectual elite were referred to as “criminals”. Even now, persons affected by his charisma (which resembled in many features that of Hitler’s) are recognizable by arranging and assessing things and events like he did, or would, even if they outwardly energetically disown themselves from his legacy. Zviadists’ exhaustive and pseu-

do-consistent picture of things has for them as much ingroup power of explanation, as Marxist history of the world had had for almost all Soviet-dominated communities. The mechanisms which made the Legend work are worth being studied at a greater length.

In the Soviet times, ethnopsychological studies had been effectively prohibited, giving way to mythologically distorted Self-perception in ethnic communities. Post-totalitarian Georgian nationalist rule had utilized all the features of Soviet-styled mythologized ethnopsychology. It is important to note that nothing could capture mass perception in Soviet Georgia unless it had a melodramatic strain to it. The Myth-permeated collective unconscious that dominated Georgian society in late 1980s, could not induce motivations for independence or statehood as such. People needed a Messiah, an epic poem, a legend come true. The play waited for the recognizable images to fit into the cast of characters.

In winter of 1994 Gamsakhurdia mysteriously died in exile, after his last unsuccessful attempt in the fall of 1993 to renew civil war in Georgia and to restore his rule. Unconsciously, all actors had correctly played the last action intended to immortalize the author, and trigger a new and greater popular movement. That the latter did not follow, had been understood by many as exhaustion of national potential, but it really had rather reflected rising awareness in people of the fundamentally artificial character of the Legend itself. On the other hand, the group of "true believers" in Legend and Conspiracy had finally taken shape, but its real size and structure remains largely unestimated. Yet, the nation will hardly be able to recover from the existing manifold crisis, unless its main intrinsic conflict is resolved.

# Consolidation Or New Conflict

# 1996

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Georgia. War Report (IWPR) #42, June, 1996.

## CONSOLIDATION OR NEW CONFLICT

After five years of quasi-independence, Georgia is still in limbo. However, it would be unfair to ignore the visible stabilisation here since Georgia accepted a Russian military presence and de facto political supervision of the country in late 1993. Since the November 1995 elections Georgia has begun a slow recovery from recent crises with the reaffirmed presidency of Eduard Shevardnadze and a manageable Parliament. Yet in view of unresolved problems like the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and growing tension in the Armenian-populated settlements in southern Georgia, this may just be the lull before the storm: the Russian presidential elections in June 1996 promise to bring massive support for secessionist movements in the post-Soviet states should the communists win. While the first signs have appeared that Abkhazia and South Ossetia might move towards accepting Georgian jurisdiction, the existing tension in the southern Georgian regions of Ninotsminda (bordering Armenia) and Akhalkalaki (bordering Turkey) might be manipulated into a full-scale conflict.

Fragmentation of society is a visible outcome of the turbulent times Georgia has lived through recently. Freedom of travel was what people longed for in the USSR. Now citizens of independent Georgia are getting used to the fact that while they can now go almost anywhere in the world they cannot travel freely in their own country. The emotionally-charged politicisation of Georgian society under President Zviad Gamsakhurdia has swung to the other extreme: Georgians now appear totally apolitical. Individualism, always marked in Georgians, has acquired a strong streak of indifference. People are adapting to new realities. Some who used to mourn the time when they sunbathed on the beaches of Abkhazia now enjoy themselves in resorts like Antalya on Turkey's Mediterranean coast, while poorer people have to make do with less costly pleasures.

The ruined Georgian economy has been a major source of frustration in society. Foreign investment remains a remote prospect. The entire annual budget in December 1995 was \$200 million, more than half of it made up of Western aid. The debt to Turkmenistan alone, for the natural gas supply that was radically cut in December 1994, exceeds \$500 million. More than half Georgia's enterprises are at a standstill. The only ray of hope is the Caspian oil pipeline, which is due to pass through both Georgia and war-torn Chechnya.

Yet, if you ask a Georgian in the street what is the number one problem to be settled, the answer will probably be Abkhazia, not the dire state of the economy. The protracted conflict with the secessionist leadership of Abkhazia – which erupted into war from August 14, 1992 to September 27, 1993 – has produced a remarkable degree of intolerance of Georgians among the Abkhaz, which did not diminish even after 250,000 Georgians and members of other ethnic groups were expelled from Abkhazia in the wake of the ethnic war.

The whole Georgian-Abkhaz conflict is tied up with a remarkable legal situation, which can be termed the "Abkhaz paradox". In the multiethnic Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, the Abkhaz made up only about 17 percent of the entire population (and 1.8 percent of

the population of Georgia), while Georgians made up 46 percent, with considerable numbers from other ethnic groups, including Russians, Armenians and Greeks. It was clear that had open and democratic elections been held in Abkhazia there was no guarantee the Abkhaz would have formed a majority in the local parliament or other ruling bodies. The ultra-nationalist rhetoric of the Georgian ethnocratic leadership aggravated the situation in 1990-1992. To defuse the growing conflict, the Gamsakhurdia government had to pass a special decree to ensure that ethnic Abkhaz would form the majority in the parliament of Abkhazia, regardless of the outcome of elections. Twenty eight seats were allocated for the Abkhaz, against 26 for the rest. This measure proved totally inadequate because the conflict had by then become acute.

Paradoxically again, the traditionally good relations between ethnic Abkhaz and ethnic Georgians were an obstacle to the secessionist cause. In order to give some theoretical basis and legitimacy to their fight for independence, Abkhaz ideologists created a version of the region's history and of the Georgian-Abkhaz relationship over the past century, which had Georgians methodically repressing and assimilating the Abkhaz ethnos until it became a minority on its own land. Stalin and, particularly, Beria were accused of deliberately enforcing mixed marriages and changes of surname, which were to lead to the eventual deportation of the Abkhaz and the establishment of Georgian domination in Abkhazia.

Russian supporters of Abkhaz nationalism have concentrated on fostering the pro-Communist secessionist leadership of this Black Sea province, partly because of Russia's complicated relationships with Ukraine. The prospect of losing control over large portions of the Black Sea coast and its ports — traditional lifelines to Caucasian and Central Asian oil, gas and other resources — threatened to undermine Russia's strategic interests in the region. The situation in Georgia simplified Russia's task, as the country was then under the joint control of two rival criminalized paramilitary groups under Tengiz Kitovani and Jaba Ioseliani, both of them key figures in the coup that ousted Gamsakhurdia and brought Shevardnadze to pow-

er. The legacy of the past few years is an overwhelming sense among Georgians that the solution of ethnic conflicts and the destiny of smaller nations totally depend on the will of the major powers.

Comparing the two major conflicts in Georgia — over Abkhazia and South Ossetia — we see a clear difference: one represents a legal deadlock complicated by considerable intolerance and the possible renewal of armed clashes, while the other, it appears, has reached the stage of exhaustion and is ready for conciliation. Several things determine the position and agenda of the two opposing parties: (1) both Abkhaz and South Ossetians have for a prolonged period got used to enjoying the rights and privileges of a certain degree of self-government; (2) fundamental distrust has grown among them towards the central Georgian authorities, and ethnic Georgians in general; (3) there has been an overarching (USSR), or externally dominant (Russia) power they got used to seeing as a protecting shield or, at least, as a means to balance what they see as Georgian assimilationism. When the conflicts started, they both felt they would be safe only if they secured a level of autonomy at least one stage higher than they had before. The ideal put forward in political polemics was, of course, “full autonomy” — or the creation of an independent nation-state — but a realistic objective seemed to be a one-degree upgrade of their status.

We see a pattern among the claims of Georgia’s minority nationalities, which varies over time. The South Ossetians, who had an Autonomous Region within the Georgian SSR, proclaimed a Union Republic in late 1990, to be incorporated directly in the Soviet Union. The Abkhaz, who had an Autonomous Republic within the Georgian SSR (that they retained under successive post-Soviet Georgian governments), proclaimed a Russian-oriented independent state in 1992. The Armenian-dominated areas in southern Georgia started in mid 1995 to demand their own autonomous status in the proposed federal structure of Georgia, so far a fairly minimal one.

Where will Georgia go from here? There has been animated discussion in parliament and government, in the media and at the community level in Georgia of the possibility of a federalist solu-



tion to the problem of territorial integrity. But Georgian society has proved generally unprepared for this kind of approach. Although there have been no reliable polls on the subject yet, most people still see federalism as a way to dismember the country by legal means and to encourage minority claims for autonomy, or even secession. The underlying fears are about long-term instability and the weakness of the state; the inability to secure state borders; law enforcement in minority-populated areas; regulation of inter-ethnic relations; and a strong foreign policy. In view of these fears and the situation in conflict zones, many Georgians see a unitary model of the state as the only way to consolidate the country. This clearly shows how inconsistent public awareness in Georgia still is.

# 1996

## What Has Been Going On In Georgia?

Georgia is slowly recovering after several severest economic, political, ethnic and social crises the country had to overcome in just a few years of its post-Soviet development period. After the consolidating parliamentary and presidential elections in November of 1995 people's expectations have grown about the improvements in social policies, crime reduction, and foreign investments in national economy. It is also understood that real revival can start only after two of the major remaining painful problems - conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia - are solved. Writes S. Neil MacFarlane, "Speaking frankly, there is a growing impatience in the West with the lack of success in negotiating a solution to these conflicts. Again, the issue of who is to blame here is not as important as the lack of movement itself. The parties to the conflicts risk creating the general impression that people in the region simply cannot get their act together. The international community has to separate the parties and monitor the zones of disengagement, and the willingness of aid organizations to sustain those affected by the conflicts. These organizations, and the governments that finance them, face deepening financial

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, July, 1996.

## SECURITY PROBLEMS IN GEORGIA IN THE LIGHT OF THE CONFLICT IN FORMER SOUTH OSSETIA

### WHAT HAS BEEN GOING ON IN GEORGIA?

Georgia is slowly recovering after several severest economic, political, ethnic and social crises the country had to overcome in just a few years of its post-Soviet development period. After the consolidating parliamentary and presidential elections in November of 1995 people's expectations have grown about the improvements in social policies, crime reduction, and foreign investments in national economy. It is also understood that real revival can start only after two of the major remaining painful problems – conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia – are solved, as writes S. Neil MacFarlane, "Speaking frankly, there is a growing impatience in the West with the lack of success in negotiating a solution to these conflicts. Again, the issue of who is to blame here is not as important as the lack of movement itself. The parties to the conflicts risk creating the general impression that people in the region simply cannot get their act

together. This is very important, because the stability of the cease-fires and the capacity of Georgia to cope with the humanitarian consequences of these conflicts depends strongly on the willingness of international institutions to separate the parties and monitor the zones of disengagement, and the willingness of aid organizations to sustain those affected by the conflicts. These organizations, and the governments that finance them, face deepening financial problems of their own, and growing demands on their services elsewhere. Patience is growing thin, as is evident in the growing difficulty in financing aid activities in Georgia. Without positive developments in conflict resolution, the considerable potential for progress on economic and political fronts is unlikely to be realized”<sup>1</sup>.

International organizations have been trying to be active all these years in assisting Georgian authorities in finding peaceful settlement for the conflicts. The OSCE and the UN were the first to establish their missions in Tbilisi in 1992. Since then the OSCE has focused on identifying humanitarian needs, helping provide humanitarian assistance and protection of human and minority rights in conflict zones, primarily in South Ossetia. The OSCE was also instrumental in mediating negotiations and creating conditions for meetings, discussions between leading Georgian and Ossetian figures, working out documents that would facilitate democratic reforms and human and minority rights protection in Georgia. If the results of these activities fall somewhat short of public expectations in Georgia, it is largely due to the extreme complexity of issues themselves, as well as to the fragmented and frustrated state the society has been in.

### **INTERNAL PICTURE OF THE CONFLICTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SOCIETY**

As a result of the civil war and the two grave internal conflicts, almost 250,000 IDPs are still placed outside their homes. Many of them are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, or became

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<sup>1</sup> MacFarlane, 1996.

psychologically disbalanced, frustrated by the vanishing prospect of returning home. Their vulnerability is aggravated by general social and economic hardships existing in Georgia.

As an effect of the Tzarist colonization and seven decades of Soviet rule, Georgia does not have traditions and experience of self-sustaining market economy. Privatization goes slow, and does not raise high expectations in people. Recent and ongoing energy crises, enforced currency reforms, and the growth of prices and fees have further aggravated social situation in vulnerable groups like IDPs, pensioners, high school teachers and their dependents, whose standard of living and quality of life remain extremely low. Masses of disoriented young people get involved in semi-legal or illegal business, or are taking to alcohol and drugs. What is probably most important, almost nobody among conflict affected people really believes conflicts can ever be solved peacefully.

Georgian mass media did not often play a constructive role in overcoming the post-conflict crises. Instead of pragmatically and realistically approaching the problem, and thus, preparing people for reconciliation, tolerance and nonviolent interaction with their recent foes, they have rather been doing the opposite by going over and over the scores of killed, tortured, raped, and missing people on Georgian side, focusing on and reinforcing traumatic moments, especially those related to the hurt national pride. Among the most dangerous indications of the mental status of broad sections of population has been sympathy and support many people show for militaristic or victimizing media programs, while, on the other hand, entirely questioning all the peace-making and peace-keeping efforts sponsored by the Georgian government and mediated by international organizations, and evincing strong belief that their problems can only be solved by military force. Very few people believe in peaceful resolution of conflicts through negotiation.

Popular perception has been that the recent visible stabilization and decline of organized crime in Georgia cannot take substantial effect with regard to public expectations and the social prospect until the territorial integrity of the country is restored, and separatism

is defeated and punished. Federalist solution is perceived as a way to dissolve the country, and democratic management as a costly liberal kind of luxury that only big and rich countries can afford. Nostalgia for a strong hand is still potent, especially in older generation. Deeply rooted complexes of fault, inferiority, and growing victimization create the necessity for compensatory mechanisms. On the whole, psychological and mental status of the communities on both sides of conflict prevents them from perceiving adequately its reasons, current situation and the existing options.

### **WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT UNIQUE ABOUT OUR CONFLICTS**

Major domestic and foreign-made analysis of the situation in Georgia was focused on the Abkhazian issue. Choosing to speak about Georgia's security in the light of the South Ossetian conflict, it can still be seen that South Ossetian and Abkhazian problems can hardly be studied separately from each other. Their comparison reveals many features that might facilitate the movement towards their better understanding and constructive transformation of either of them.

To create a complete picture, both state and community security problems should be addressed from inside (*ex parte interna*) and outside (*ex parte externa*). So far underestimated side of the problem has been the community security issue as it is seen from inside the breakaway regions. Studying it would also add to better understanding of the Russian dimension of the mentioned and other ethno-political conflicts in the FSU.

In spite of all the complexity of internal political and economic situation in Russia, some ethnic minorities in newly independent states, Georgia included, had seen Russia as able to give them better social guarantees, stable development and, surprisingly, more ethnically tolerant attitudes than they might expect from titular ethnic groups in their NIS. One underlying interest determining pro-Russian trends in the community support for secessionist movements

has obviously been an economic one: being tied up with the Russian legislation promised incomparably higher salaries, wages, pensions, etc. This, along with the need to find an “ecological niche” within a big power, had clearly been the case both in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, until the Chechen war has shaken seriously the minorities’ belief in their secured future within the Russian Federation.

### **SOUTH OSSETIA AS COMPARED TO ABKHAZIA**

There is an evident difference between the Abkhazian and South-Ossetian problems: one represents a legal deadlock complicated by a considerable intolerance and the possibility of renewal of armed clashes, while the other conflict looks fatigued and ripe for conciliatory efforts. Solution to the Abkhazian problem is mainly hindered by a non-compromising position of the Abkhaz secessionist leadership, while a major obstacle to the solution of Ossetian question is the fear among ethnic Georgians before restoration of the abolished autonomy.

Other significant differences between the two conflicts are that: (i) most part of the ethnic Georgian population of South Ossetia, in spite of the unsafety of everyday life, never left their villages, while almost the entire Georgian population of Abkhazia had to flee from the region; (ii) considerable part of the Tskhinvali community is ready to accept Georgian jurisdiction (which is strengthened by the growing trade and human contacts, and often willingness to speak Georgian language), while we see no visible trend in this direction from the Abkhaz; (iii) South Ossets are landlocked, less strategically located, and expect much lesser support from outside in case of aggravation of their conflict, than Abkhaz do.

Expert assessment of the South Ossetia conflict has been as being much closer to constructive transformation and solution than the Abkhaz one. Yet, the problem turns out more complicated than that. Since the 1992 Dagomys accords that brought cease-fire to Tskhinvali region, the OSCE mediated May 16 Memorandum of 1996 was anticipated as the most important step in negotiations, a pos-

sible breakthrough in relationships between conflicting parties. The final text eventually signed was not exactly what was expected by the Georgian society: it avoided the most painful moments of the definition of the region. It did not contain articles on when, and where, and how the political solution of the problem is to be finalized. This situation looked so intolerable in the eyes of Georgian public consciousness, that the Georgian television decided in its account broadcast immediately after the Memorandum was signed to 'fill the gap', saying "the Osset side has agreed in the Memorandum to accept Georgian jurisdiction over former South Ossetia region"<sup>1</sup>.

Looking realistically at the Memorandum, it is obvious that the public expectations had been exaggerated. The Memorandum, undoubtedly a step forward in the long row of statements issued by the sides, could not be a stronger document than it is. It contains important articles like refusal to use military force or pressure, demilitarization of the conflict zone, amnesty for those who fought but did not commit war crimes or crimes against civilians, commitment to solve refugee problems, etc. Without these, further steps would prove impossible. Yet, the Memorandum can come into effect only if it is followed both by practical measures of its implementation and renewed negotiations on the political settlement of Georgian-Ossetian problem.

Oddly enough, the main obstacle to the solution of South Ossetian conflict remains... a toponimic question.

The above scheme only reflects a dominating opinion in each of the conflicting parties at the community level. It does not consider these opinions with respect to official documents, or to the status of negotiations. It also leaves open a difficult question like to what extent people are ready or willing to commit themselves to the realization of the expressed objectives (E.g. it is known that apolitical people often like offensive rhetoric).

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<sup>1</sup> TV News Release "Matsne", 16.05.96.

Considering and comparing the above statements, we can clearly see some common points, such as: (i) stable mutual distrust, (ii) mutual fear, though much greater on the minority side, (iii) unsubstantiated generalizations, extrapolations and judgments on all sides. Remarkably ill parties agree in their pessimistic assessment of the future of Georgian state. Thus, the expressed need for protective measures for their own communities. And, of course, an obvious grotesque exaggeration of the positions of side as perceived by their opponents, is present.

On the whole, based on the above scheme, one can observe enough structural resemblance in the psychology of the parties to conflict in Georgia to hope that a facilitated effort aimed at mitigation of the crisis, mediated by a third party respected on both sides, might be successful.

1996

### **COULD FEDERALISM HELP SOLVE THE CONFLICTS?**

There has been animated discussion in the parliament and government, in the media and at the community level in Georgia on the possibility of federalist solution to the territorial integrity problem. The Georgian society proved generally unprepared for multiculturalist and federalist approaches to the problem: although there have not been credible polls on the subject, most people see federalism as a way to disintegrate the country through legalization and encouragement of the minority claims for growing autonomization and, prospectively, secession. The underlying fears are before long-term instability and weakness of the state structures, their inability to secure state borders and law enforcement in minority populated areas, to regulate inter-ethnic relations, and to provide a strong foreign policy. In view of the situation in conflict zones and given the same fears, a unitary model of state still looks for them like a consolidating solution, which clearly shows how fragmented and inconsistent public consciousness in Georgia still is (Khutsishvili 1996).



## DEVELOPING A REGIONAL SECURITY CONCEPT FOR THE CAUCASUS

FINAL REPORT

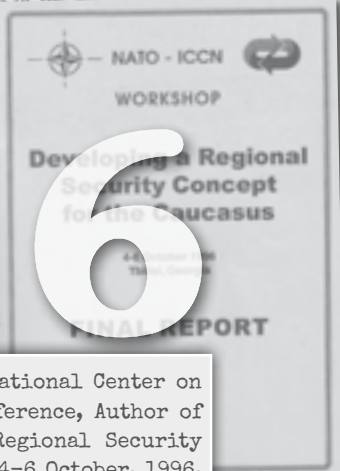
Proceedings of the Workshop Co-Sponsored by

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

The Internat

The book contains proceedings of the workshop "Regional Security Concept for the Atlantic Treaty Organization: Negotiation, October 4-6, 1996" the seminar "Integration and Isolation: Implications for Regional Security" by Brown University's Program on International Conflict and Negotiation.

Based on audio recordings of the workshop, participants for publication. Brown-ICCN Seminar 1996. Brown University



1996  
By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Chairman of the Conference, Author of the Final Report of the Conference: Developing a Regional Security Concept for the Caucasus, Organized by NATO-ICCN, on 4-6 October, 1996, Tbilisi, Georgia.

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE CAUCASUS

Surprisingly, a large share of the problems faced in the post-Soviet Caucasus are internally induced, and would exist despite the policies of greater powers. Along-with the inevitable post-totalitarian transition problems, this includes the role of ethnic psychology and national cultures, especially traditions like the Caucasus code of dignity.

The war in Chechnya has highlighted the distinctive features common to all the Caucasus-type conflicts: the mythologized national ambition of most of the parties (David vs Goliath syndrome) degenerating into self-victimisation, combined with the acute sense of autonomy degenerating into an ethnically induced self-isolationism. All these features have had plenty of room to develop in the thirteen decades since the end of the Caucasian War in 1864, when Russia had finalised its colonial expansion to include the Caucasus. The issue of forced re-integration has temporarily lost its priority with the growth of frustration, weariness, and the centrifugal tendencies within Russia itself, to the extent that there has been no visible support for the rebelling Chechens from their fellow North

Caucasians who have recently, vehemently fought for the independence of Abkhazia from Georgia. The non-Russian population of the North Caucasus, silently sympathising with the Chechen cause, is now divided into two parts: peoples who have put up with the idea of seeing their lands as part of the Russian Federation, and are trying not to complicate their future within Russia, and others who nurture the idea of some day gaining independence.

The Caucasus is a highly diversified multiethnic area of the former Soviet Union, located between the Black and Caspian Seas and linking Russia with the Middle East. Its strategic, inter-cultural and interreligious situation has historically made this region a front-line lot numerous wars and violent conflicts. Russian-dominated since the nineteenth century, the area has decomposed with the collapse of the Soviet Union into three newly independent states – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (known collectively under the name of *Caucasia*, or, from the Russian perspective, *Transcaucasia*). Georgia, traditionally Orthodox Christian since AD 337 and moderately Islamic Azerbaijan are decidedly multiethnic, unlike Armenia (Christian since AD 334) landlocked further to the south.

The smaller Caucasian nationalities like the Chechens, Ingushetians, Adyghs, Lezgins, Cherkess, Balkars, Avars (with Ossets or Alans standing out) are much more closely related to one other than to any of the three major Caucasian nations. These have remained as constituent parts within the Russian Federation, with greater or lesser degree of autonomy preserved. The Russian North-Caucasian autonomous regions (divided from Georgia and Azerbaijan by the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range) have also been rapidly growing in their national identity, led of course by Chechnya which remains involved in its treacherous bid for independence from the Russian Federation.

In spite of its seemingly marginal position in the post-Soviet space, The Caucasus has repeatedly attracted international concern over the civil wars and coups in Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Azeri-Armenian war over the Nagorno Karabakh enclave (the most protracted conflict in the former Soviet space), and the high-inten-

sity conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Ingushetia, and Chechnya. Since December 1994, the latter conflict has grown into an open confrontation with central Russian authorities as the Yeltsin administration tried to press rebellious former Soviet Airborne General Dzhokhar Dudayev (now deceased), president of the self-proclaimed Chechen State, into submission and recognition of Russian jurisdiction over Chechnya.

December 1994 for the first time illustrated the realistic prospect of an all-Caucasian war involving Russia in a new Afghanistan-style protracted conflict, with consequences disastrous to Russia's territorial integrity, and unpredictable in their impact upon international security.

Georgia, which had for better part of its pre-Russian history played a central and leading role in Caucasia, was relatively better linked with and more oriented toward Europe than the rest of the Caucasian nations. However, as the post-Soviet developments of 1990-92 showed, Georgia also turned out to be vulnerable to extreme ethno-nationalism and charismatic demagoguery of new leaders (the period later called by President Shevardnadze as "provincial fascism").

The Georgian case is remarkable among post-Soviet states, for even in the Soviet times this nation was perceived among the Union Republics as least affected by the official ideology and its imposed worldview. Georgia, along with the Baltic nations, is known to have pioneered demolition of the Empire. Georgian psychological and cultural self-image, however, distinguishing them, e.g., from Soviet Central-Asians, must have also caused the Georgian way to independence, to be more painful and complicated than that of the Baltics, also Georgians had been facing an intensity of intra-ethnic conflict Central-Asian nations (with the exception of Tajikistan) never came close to. To a huge extent, this may be better understood by taking into consideration both the general tendencies of classic and modern nationalism, and the specificities of Georgian post-Soviet nationalism.

It would be unfair not to notice a visible stabilization in Georgia after it has accepted a Russian military presence and actual political supervision of the country since the fall of 1993, after the Russian brokered talks collapsed, and Abkhazia broke away, again with Russian assistance. Yet, if you ask “a man in the street” in Georgia what is the number one problem to be settled before the country can recover, you will most probably hear Abkhazia mentioned – not the decimated economy. The protracted conflict with the secessionist leadership of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia has been marked with a remarkable degree of ethnic intolerance in Abkhazians (c. 80,000) against Georgians which has not ceased, even after more than 250,000 ethnic Georgians were expelled from Abkhazia as a result of an ethnic war (August 14, 1992 to September 27, 1993).

1996

There has been much dispute over the question of Russian involvement in post-Soviet ethnopolitical conflicts, which the Russian authorities themselves, have repeatedly explained away as inspired by nationalists’ conspiratorial mindsets in the republics and by the speculation of the Western press. What is less known is that the existing picture of the conflicts in the Caucasus (secessionist wars in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Azeri-Armenian war over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, the situation in the breakaway Chechnya, ethnic clashes between the Ingush and North-Ossetian autonomies) has largely been created and spread around the world by Russian television, the only ubiquitous dominating force in the post-Soviet information space. This makes discussion of the role of the media in escalating or resolving ethnic and social conflict especially important.

The Caucasus region had for a long time been perceived by the external world as indistinguishable from Russia. The Soviet Caucasians had to explain to every foreigner that they represented cultures and spoke languages different from Russian, and had individual histories of their statehood. Even Western newsmen right on the spot, had no knowledge of local languages and very little knowledge of local backgrounds. They were largely conditioned by

what they saw on Moscow TV. And they could hardly imagine the degree of subjectivity with which live reports and comments could be made to them.

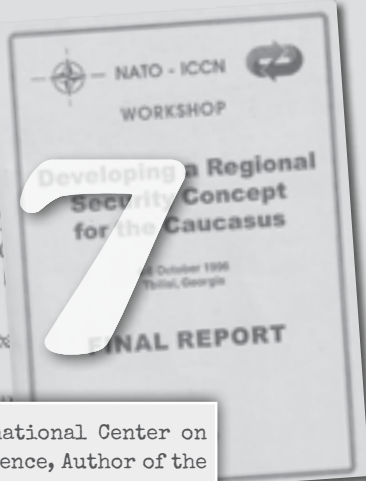
A natural question arises – why should the Russian state have been interested in manipulating and aggravating ethnic conflicts in the bordering newly independent republics, in view of their contagious proximity to Russia, and the unstable situation in this (still!) largest country in the world? The correct answer would be in distinguishing between the forces that have been officially defining and actually defining Russian military strategies. According to the rational choice theory, it would not be necessary to assume a single rational actor behind the whole complicated picture: rather a statistically sufficient synergy of people in the military-, security apparatus, the legislature, combined with a dominating sentiment of their voters is “what hath done this deed”.

This implies another natural question: why should a country no longer representing a globally expansive ideology, and now moving toward Western standards in culture and economy, be opposed to growing ties of a Western defence alliance with former Russian dominions?

Regardless of the rationale behind Russia’s unrelenting resistance to NATO expansion, one thing remains crystal clear. That Caucasia must necessarily be factored into the final equation.

# DEVELOPING A REGIONAL SECURITY CONCEPT FOR THE CAUCASUS

# 1997



By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Chairman of the Conference, Author of the Final Report of the Conference: *Developing a Regional Security Concept for the Caucasus*, Organized by NATO-ICCN, on 4-6 October, 1996, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Cover design by George Khutsishvili, Ph.D.

## TOWARDS A MORE SECURE CAUCASUS: OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP “DEVELOPING A REGIONAL SECURITY CONCEPT FOR THE CAUCASUS”

The problem of the Caucasus stands out in the long list of trouble spots on the post-Soviet map. In recent years, it has looked like nothing more than a cluster of ethnic wars, high and low-intensity conflicts, and zones of social unrest. However, despite the notorious protracted conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Ingushetia, the Caucasus was long of only marginal interests in the spectrum of world politics – that is, until the really explosive potential of the region became manifest through: (a) the war in Chechnya which has shocked the world with its intensity and ruthlessness, and (b) the Caspian oil issue, which has impacted world economic priorities, therefore, in a sinuous way, helped to terminate the Chechen war.

It has long been clear that without factoring in what each of the major players in the region considers to be his or her indispensable

strategic interests, it is impossible to achieve lasting peace in the Caucasus. Co-operation between the three Transcaucasian states – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – has always been understood as the number one issue. Even so, approaches to this goal have been as varied in all three states. Georgia's first post-Communist leadership was ethnonationalist. It tried to promote an idea of "the Caucasian Home" for the indigenous nations in the region that totally disregarded Russia's interests. The failure of ethnonationalist regimes in almost all post-Soviet states marked the transition to a new stage of rationalisation of national goals and perspectives. Georgia's President, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, has several times promoted the idea of a peaceful Caucasus on a rational basis of similarity between or coincidence of interests of all the nations and ethnic groups that inhabit the region, as well as in accordance with the vital strategic interests of the neighbouring large powers. Nations and peoples which have interacted over such a historically considerable period, and thus have very much in common, should more easily become partners in building their independent statehood and defence partnership. Yet the unrelenting Abkhaz and Karabakh problems, and especially the war in Chechnya, have demonstrated that Russia's "rational approach" to Caucasus problems is very slow to materialise.

NATO, as the world's most powerful and successful defence alliance, has accumulated enormous experience in the theoretical study, development and practical application of national security concepts and defence co-operation strategies for nations that have sorely needed them. Its Partnership for Peace Programme has already become an effective instrument for building peace and co-operation in the post-Communist world. Georgia, owing to its geopolitical location, can play a constructive role in confidence building, peacemaking, and defence co-operation throughout the entire region of the post-Soviet Caucasus. And it would be an unaffordable luxury for Georgia and other Caucasian nations to disregard the NATO experience and its proposed assistance.

The visit of NATO Secretary General Dr. Javier Solana in February 1997 to the post-Soviet states, including Georgia, once again displayed NATO's strong intention to develop co-operation with us on a mutually advantageous basis; our share in this "bargain" being stable co-operation in peacemaking efforts, irreversible movement toward democratic society and the rule of law. President Shevardnadze, during his meeting with Mr. Solana, said "The integration process currently underway in the Eurasian space is not targeted against any country or region and serves the goal of building universal security guarantees in a form acceptable to all countries". The president stressed that their lengthy and far reaching discussion only served to confirm this position.

1997

The first NATO co-sponsored seminar on developing a national security concept for Georgia, held under the aegis of CIPDD, took place in Tbilisi in March 1996. Political developments in the region since have shown the necessity to speed up the process by considering national security issues in the regional context. This is why a larger scale workshop with NATO's more active participation covering a broader spectrum of interdependent issues was realised as a must, and took place in October 1996 in Tbilisi.

The reasons for holding the joint NATO-ICCN Workshop "Developing a Regional Security Concept for the Caucasus" were many. The Caucasus is a historically determined unity of cultures, traditions, attitudes, and life-styles of the peoples who inhabit the region. If this is overlooked, it will lie impossible for the world community to assist in settling our disputes, or resolving our conflicts. Moreover, it becomes more and more clear that the Caucasus nations cannot develop their national security concepts without considering them within a framework of a broader, regional security. Creating conditions for Armenians and Azeris to sit at the same table for a mediated discussion of their common problems of regional security building could also create a favourable atmosphere for finding long-sought solutions to issues pertaining to their protracted dispute over the Nagorno Karabakh enclave. It is important that we help each other to address internal conflicts – rather an oxymoron since



history repeatedly shows that internal political conflict is something that cannot generally be solved internally, and requires international involvement. This requires networking and consultation at the international level.

The main objectives of this workshop were:

- To initiate the process necessary for development and implementation of a regional security concept and defence partnership – cooperation strategies for the Caucasus;
- To define the key role that Georgia might play in confidence building and conflict prevention in the region due to its geostrategic position; and
- To explore the opportunities the Partnership for Peace program implies for its participant countries for fostering and managing these processes.

The workshop sought to achieve the following goals:

- To define the essential components of a regional security concept and defence co-operation idea between the states of the Caucasus and the bordering Black Sea basin countries;
- To discuss the special circumstances that affect the development of such a concept and such strategies for the post-Soviet Caucasus Region;
- To consider Georgia's potential and available opportunities for playing a key role in confidence building and regional conflict management; and
- To outline a concrete and co-ordinated program of action for the elaboration and implementation of a regional security concept and defence co-operation in the Caucasus.

As for the method proposed, four topics were offered for brainstorming in the groups of participants:

- Regional Security Concept and the Impact of Partnership for Peace;
- The Contribution of Russia and Turkey to the Regional Security;

- The Role of the Media and Non-governmental Organisations;
- Society and Military Containment of Regional Conflicts.

The four topics were discussed in plenary sessions, and then brainstorming groups were formed. Each group involved Georgian experts, experts from other countries of the region, and Western experts, whose objective was to outline practical steps toward overcoming the specific problems addressed in the session. The results formed the basis for the closing plenary discussion during which the designated rapporteurs summarised the discussions and brainstorming results in a final proposal for a co-ordinated program of action.

Just as discussions on Georgia's problems led to considering them in the Caucasus context, so the Caucasus issues would naturally lead to discussion in a still broader context; developments and scenarios concerning the entire area of the former Soviet Union and parts of Europe. To address this natural development, we envisaged the seminar "Integration and Disintegration in the Former Soviet Union: Implications for Regional and Global Security" jointly organised by the Program for Global Security at Brown University, Providence, RI, USA, and the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, to be held during the Workshop. ICCN is among the co-ordinators of the Brown University's project under the same title. That seminar, four different scenarios of the post-Soviet development were offered to the participants for consideration. Not surprisingly, discussions following the Brown-ICCN Seminar focused predominantly on the Caucasus problems.

As was stressed by Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, and Mr. Werner Bauwens, Head of External Relations, NATO Bureau of Information and Press, in the welcoming addresses as well as by many other speakers, building a new model for security in the Caucasus region is vitally important. Despite the unsolved problems between the nations in the region, there is a growing need for developing joint problem-solving strategies, and

visualising these problems in a contextual framework of collective security models.

The keynote address by the leading NATO representative at the Workshop, Vice Admiral Michael P. Grettton (European Representative at the Supreme Allied Commandment of NATO), was focused on defining a regional security concept, and how it would differ from a national security concept. It also covered a broad spectrum of issues such as NATO efforts and strategies in building European security, and NATO's attitude towards Russia as "the continent's most important variable".

Remarks by Mr. William Courtney, US Ambassador to Georgia, on peace building measures in Abkhazia, Georgia, for the first time presented the official formulation of US policy towards the position of Abkhazia's separatist leadership, and the way this protracted conflict should be addressed in order to be resolved in accordance with the principles of international law.

Each day of the Workshop held the expectation that the topic of NATO expansion to the East and Russia's attitude toward it would dominate discussions, or at least insinuate itself into other related topical discussions. But however interesting, the Russian issue did not distract participants' attention from other important issues, and was in fact only very gingerly touched upon (a fact specifically noted by representatives of the Russian Embassy in Georgia). As for the issue of Russia's role in the Caucasus region, everybody's hopes could be expressed by US President Bill Clinton's words, uttered during his first visit to Moscow, that Russia "has a chance to show that a great power can promote patriotism without expansionism; that a great power can promote national pride without national prejudice... I believe the measure of your greatness in the future will be whether Russia, the big neighbour, can be the good neighbour".

The Workshop attracted considerable interest domestically and abroad, and was undoubtedly a major event of the year with regard to pressing issues in the Caucasus. Fifteen countries sent representatives to the Workshop, most of the ambassadors and heads of

international missions accredited in Georgia actively participated throughout the Workshop, and the attendance of representatives from the breakaway region of South Ossetia was especially notable. The remarks from some discussants that participation of representatives from the Northern Caucasus would be relevant confirmed the idea of the Caucasus being (in some ways) regarded as one indivisible unit despite political borders.

The joint Workshop of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation marked a new stage in Georgia's emerging consciousness as an independent nation moving towards adapting to the civilised world's democratic norms and values. Now, the need of smaller countries like Georgia for Western assistance in raising their security consciousness is obvious, and NATO's willingness to assist the newly independent post-Soviet and Eastern European nations in re-establishing and/or reassessing their independent statehood is understandable. What may raise questions and require a bit of explanation is why a powerful international organisation with global influence should appear as a partner of a small non-governmental institution in Georgia, rather than, for instance a Ministry of Foreign Affairs or a parliament.

There is a rising understanding in our country that society should take initiative not only in managing our problems, but also in offering the international donors the most constructive and effective ways in providing and deploying their assistance. The role of NGOs as a vital component of democracy building is not yet fully recognized in our country, however, it is a normal and universally accepted practice in the West to enhance the capacity of developing nations by supporting NGOs, especially those working for confidence- and peace-building, democratic transformation and conflict resolution. NATO's equal partnership in organising and conducting the Workshop has therefore been no less important for us than NATIP's financial support of the Workshop.

As a result of the Workshop, we now have a clearer idea of regional security co-operation which should bring us closer to the ideal of peace, understanding, and confidence building between

the Caucasian countries. We hope that the present Report and the resulting book intended to be based on the findings and discussions of the Workshop, will mark significant contribution to the beginning of long and productive process which began with developing national security concepts, has grown to encompass regional security concepts and models, and will eventually address the creation of international security models.

I am far from thinking this Final Report to be accurate enough in both perfectly reflecting the creativity of general atmosphere, and exactly following what was said in presentations and discussions of the Workshop. I encourage readers, especially the Workshop participants to provide feedback to ICCN on the quality and accuracy of this publication's treatment of the main issues of the event.

In closing, let me express my deep gratitude for the people and organisations without whose support and friendly concern the Workshop would not have taken place. These are, first of all, the NATO Bureau of Information and Press (NATIP), the United States Information Service (USIS) Democracy Program, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (ICCN's main benefactor), and Brown University, who all financially supported the Workshop. Extremely important was the constant support I felt, prior and during the Workshop and Seminar, offered by Mr. Zurab Abashidze, Georgian Ambassador to Belgium and Benelux countries, Mr. Zurab Lomashvili, then Head of the NATO Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Professor Terrence Hopmann, Director of the Program for Global Security at Brown University, Mr. Wolfgang Manig, then Assistant to the NATO Secretary General's Special Advisor on Eastern Europe and the FSU, Mr. Kakha Imnadze, the Georgian Liaison Officer for NATO, and Ms. Molly O'Neal, of the US Embassy in Georgia.

I want to extend special thanks to Ms. Maria Barlett, Adviser, Georgian State Chancellery, for her invaluable assistance in preparing this Final Report, as well as her assistance during the Workshop. Special thanks also to the ICCN staff members who devotedly worked on preparing and conducting this workshop to its successful end.

"When Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), who visited Moscow in April, asked Russian Vice President Rutskoi why his wall still displayed a large map of the Soviet Union, Rutskoi replied that the country was in a transitional state and the map may eventually be accurate again"

Washington Post, August 5, 1993

Cf. Belarus-Russia reunion, and the June 1997 Duma session where it was decided that the Anthem of the new union would be the USSR anthem (with or without changes in text)

# 1997

GENESIS OF THE MUTANT:  
POST-SOVIET CONTRIBUTION TO THE NEW WORLD DISORDER  
BREAKING THE UNBREAKABLE KNOTS

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, 1997.

## THE ROOTS OF POST-SOVIET CONFLICT: A DIE-HARD LEGACY

*"When Rep. Tom Lantos (D Calif.), who visited Moscow in April, asked Russian Vice-President Rutskoi why his wall still displayed a large map of the Soviet Union, Rutskoi replied that the country was in a transitional state and the map may eventually be accurate again".*

*Washington Post, August 5, 1993.*

*Cf. Belarus-Russia reunion, and the June 1997 Duma session where it was decided that the Anthem of the new union would be the USSR anthem (with or without changes in text).*

### **GENESIS OF THE MUTANT: POST-SOVIET CONTRIBUTION TO THE NEW WORLD DISORDER BREAKING THE UNBREAKABLE KNOTS**

The Gordian knot was designed by its ancient creator as an unsophisticated intellectual puzzle, a naive challenge for the relaxed Greek mind. When Alexander the Great saw the knot, another challenge has presumably struck him in this puzzle, a challenge to the

rationality of decision-making process, as compared to the value of object itself. Having immediately made his decision on behalf of all rational thinkers, Alexander no more shilly shallied with the knot and eliminated the problem with one movement of his sword. The story remained in millennia.

Around 2.3 thousand years later the Soviet Union created another knot of unsolvable problems challenging the whole world, which the first/last Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev had unsuccessfully tried to unfasten, and which his uncompromising and successful rival Boris Yeltsin decided, in a more Alexander-styled manner, to do away with in one energetic movement: unbreakable by definition<sup>1</sup> but decaying to the core, the virtual dis-Union was duly decomposed into its fifteen constituent parts. Yet, the problem was not eliminated. Unlike the legendary one, the Soviet knot had been intertwined by its macabre creators so as to activate a chain of violent ethnopolitical conflicts in case of its assisted disintegration.

New specters began to haunt Europe by that time, the specters of post Communism. Neo-imperialism and ethnic nationalism have been rampant in the falling empires. The nightmare of ethnopolitical conflicts started to materialize in many parts of the former Socialist block. There were warnings about the disastrous consequences of rapid disintegration (among them, those coming from Gorbachev himself who used to say to the left-wingers, "Do whatever you like, only don't dissect the alive"), but the strife of the Sovietized nations to regain independence was stronger than survival instinct. And no one in his sane mind could imagine the sufferings thousands and millions of people were destined to go through, the rapidly expanding areas of violent conflict and interethnic hatred, adding up to the growing insecurity in the entire world.

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<sup>1</sup> "The unbreakable union of the free republics has been rallied forever by the great Russia", sang the Soviet national anthem, creating another contradiction in terms.

## AN OXYMORON: “UNBREAKABLE UNION OF THE FREE REPUBLICS”

It is important to clarify why did the artificial and inhuman system survive for seven decades in the Soviet Union, how deep are the disastrous changes it made in personality and society, why is the post-totalitarian mentality dangerous to the world. Most of all it is important in view of the growing general instability in the world which causes paraphrases like “we are moving towards the new world disorder”.

The Soviet legacy which has resulted in deeply rooted irrational mind-style of most of post-Soviet communities (with the exception of distinctly European-styled Baltics, and distinctly Asian-styled Central Asians), dichotomizes the main transition problem to the two traditional questions of Russian populist intellectualism: who is to blame for all, and what is to be done (once and for all). The answer to the first question was found pretty quickly. Towards the end of *perestroika* which has questioned seven decades of the Soviet rule, Lenin and especially Stalin looked like the sole malefactors. It took only a few more years for many to reverse their decision of who was to blame for all the calamities that have followed the modern revolution: Mikhail Gorbachev, of course, who has liberalized (and thus, destabilized) the Regime, opened the way for the former dissidents to stir up masses of people, fostered collapse of the Empire, let go of Eastern Europe and thus, strengthened NATO.

The crisis and unclear prospect are pushing towards a retrograde answer to the second sacramental question (“What is to be done?”): thus, a visible revival of communist and socialist parties, and a nostalgia for the Soviet life-style with its low prices and a minimum of social guarantees. Georgia before the November 5, 1995 elections seemed to face the same problem as Russia before December 12, 1995: a consolidated group of clearcut communists versus obscure freemarketists, against the background of disappointed and nihilistic masses of voters. Yet, the elections showed that, unlike Russia, communists do not have strong standpoint in Georgia. Just for the



global security reasons, a lot of people all over the world would rather prefer it to have happened the other way round...

### **HOW DID IT ALL START?**

All has started at the same point where everything has ended: the crisis in Russia at the turn of the century, potentially dangerous for, and yet underrated by the world. One tangible difference, though, is in the thousands of nuclear warheads making Russia's democratic stabilization everybody's headache on the eve of the third millennium of modern civilization. The other difference is that, unlike the current period, Russia was no more in crisis on the turn of the previous century than any other European country. Yet the Russian answer to the crisis happened to be in three successive revolutions "skipping" (in Hemingwayan sense of the word) entire generations of people and having a profound effect on the world's evolutionary progress.

Back in the first, 1905-1907 revolution period, several idealized alternative ways emerged for the crisis management, among them (1) Russian Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin's: a solution within the existing framework of social relationships, by managing its economic dimensions; and (2) the Bolsheviks': Lenin insisted on the totality of the crisis of capitalism, and the possibility of equally total "replacement of the universe" in Russia (he had to creatively modify Marxism on this point). The former option was terminated before long by the sudden and unincidental death of its originator Stolypin.

Post WWI developments in all belligerent countries clearly show that the crisis in Russia was neither total, nor insuperable. The analysis of Lenin's, Trotsky's and other Bolsheviks' heritage show that their goal has never been to overcome the crisis as such (which would normally mean to found an open and democratic society with high standards of living and a stable economy), but rather to change the nature of society and its members by means of totally destroying the existing system of traditional values and creating a

new type of human species (this approach has first been schematically outlined in the Marx and Engels's 1848 "Manifesto").

In his famous book "Revolution and the State" (1917), Lenin has "updated" Marx's theory of socialist revolution (so called "theory of permanent revolution"). Unlike Marx, Lenin has attempted to substantiate a possibility of successful socialist revolution in a single country under specific combination of circumstances. The latter were allegedly provided in Russia by World War I and the crisis of Tzar's power in the state. In the same book Lenin carries on polemics with "the bourgeois sociologists" upon the question of basic nature of any state: according to the latter, the state should be understood as a supersocial institution designed to balance and harmonize class/group relationships, solve or mitigate social conflicts. Having agreed primarily to that, Lenin "reveals" the "true meaning" of this definition stressing the point that the balancing is made not in the interests of the whole society but only to the benefit of economically dominating and, therefore, actually ruling classes. Counterpointing the objectives of the socialist state based on the dictatorship of proletariat, Lenin makes a striking statement for any normal human logic, namely, that the dictatorship of the majority (more numerous social class) over minority of any kind is by definition democratic. Among the tragic results of the Communist rule in Russia was popular appreciation of this unscrupulous program for power grabbing, hardly mistaken for anything else by Lenin's political opponents since the time it was written.

1997

### **DETERMINANTS OF BOLSHEVIKS' SUCCESS IN RUSSIA**

Close to 1917, there was still nothing in Russian Bolsheviks' theoretical and doctrinal positions that might suggest of their obvious success over other political groups. But the thesis about the righteousness of poverty and of forceable equalization of the rich with the poor, upon which the Bolshevik populism dwelled, was something less doubted by the mass psychology in Russia, than in Europe. Three major factors have preconditioned the Bolsheviks'

popular success in Russia: (i) a millennium-old commitment of the Russian villagers to the “*obschina*” (communal) life-style, (ii) powerful traditions of the Orthodox Christianity advocating asceticism, submission to authorities, patience and references to the poverty of Christ, and (iii) impact of the popularly interpretable, emotionally charged and scientifically sounding Marxist doctrine, offering an oversimplified universal picture of nature, history and society based on the “theory” of class struggle. A certain role was also played by the deeply rooted xenophobia, manifest in both Russian higher and lower social classes’ attitude towards the West, especially towards the traditional rival – Europe.

There was something in the Russian *obschina* mentality that caused apprehension and popular resentment for the rising class of kulaks (more successful and industrious farmers) towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, and out of which the Bolshevik-sponsored Soviet mentality had partly emerged. Essentially the same syndrome is now impeding Russia’s movement towards competitiveness and the market economy, and is substantiating popular support for the communists. In an average Soviet Russian’s view, it was just not right for somebody to be more prosperous than his neighbor. It was all right, however, if the authorities took any suppressive measures towards such person or group to restore “justice”. At the early stages of Soviet rule people were even encouraged to implement mob law towards the suspiciously wealthy ones, and in all times they were encouraged to denounce them. Pavlik Morozov, a Siberian schoolkid of the 1930s, became a torch of enlightenment for Soviet kids to follow for denouncing his kulak father to the KGB.

The totalitarian regime has developed a uniquely distorted attitude towards law in people (so that even the Constitution has turned into a loose set of principles subject to free interpretation and revision by each subsequent ruler). That is why among major objectives of, and unsurmountable obstacles for Gorbachev’s *perestroika* was creation of a law-based state in the Soviet Union: law, justice, principles, integrity were the terms that found the same

interpretation in the Soviet dictionaries as anywhere else, yet carried metaphysically remote meaning for most people.

There was one feature in Lenin's powerful and controversial personality without which this undersized and unattractive intellectual with a neck-tie and burring speech would never win the hearts of the masses of overworked and frustrated workers. He was probably the first popular leader in human history characterized by both all-permeating hatred towards the existing society, and the scholarly substantiated agenda of total unselective destruction of the existing social, economic and political structure, based on this hatred (after seven decades, post-Communist ethno-nationalist leaders will exploit the same power of hatred to raise people's masses in Bosnia, Georgia and other conflict-affected areas). The whole concept of the Soviet system was based on hatred and confrontation, giving rise to the fortress and conspiratorial mentality.

1997

### **A FEW MORE NOTES ON THE FOUNDING FATHER**

Lenin was revered in the Communist world as a greatest philosopher, while his real genius was in political strategies. This included the insuperable ability to convincingly manipulate his mistakes into achievements, failures into victories, hidden agendas into predictions. As far back as 1904 the Russian society was shocked by the Bolsheviks' call for Russia's defeat in the war with Japan, and was furious with a Vladimir Ulyanov's appreciation of his fatherland's defeat as making for Tzarism's collapse and approaching popular revolution. Ten years later the Bolsheviks again psychologically shocked the society with the same appeal when the World War I broke out; but that time it sounded more appealing to people, as the prospect of military victory faded out and the frustration in society grew. Meanwhile, there was the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907, unsuccessful to Leninists but valuable for most other political parties' view as opening the way to parliamentary rule in Russia introduced by the Nikolai II October 1907 Manifesto.

The Provisional Government brought to power by the second, and successful Russian revolution of February 1917, saw its patriotic duty in continuing the war at any cost “till the victorious end”, while the Bolsheviks pursued their agenda of ending the war at any cost. (Now that there was no Tzar, it sounded strange for many, but the frustration with the unending war prevailed in people). This was actually achieved only after the October Bolshevik coup in 1917; the separatist truce with Germany was negotiated in 1918 in Brest-Litovsk, despite Lenin’s envoy Trotsky’s protest to its humiliating and disastrous consequences for Russia. This was the beginning of the end for Comrade Trotsky (later nicknamed as “Judas Trotsky”), which had to be removed out of Lenin’s way anyway. Soviet scholars and ideologists had later interpreted this process as another confirmation of Lenin’s political genius which “knew” he would win those lands back from Germans, and had managed to reveal Trotsky’s treacherous activities. In fact, Lenin had simply traded considerable Russian territory for the brake enabling him to ensure his power in Russia at the most crucial moment.

It is no more a sensation that Lenin’s pre-revolutionary anti-national agenda and destructive policies, along with inexhaustibility of his small party’s financial resources, affirmed many researchers in the opinion that he had really acted on behalf of the German secret service trying to undermine Russia’s power and later disintegrate the country. It is important for the purposes of our discourse that the founders of Soviet empire have planted in mass consciousness appreciation of unscrupulousness, and an absolutely flexible interpretation of the concept of law.

### **THE LAST CHANCE LOST**

February of 1917 will forever remain in history of Russia as an unrealized chance to complete the process started by Peter the Great which had its main objective in finally bringing Russia into Europe culturally, economically and politically. Unlike the situation of the 1980s, Russia could overcome the 1917 pre-revolutionary

crisis by updating its state structure and socio-economic system, having, of course, to deal with basically the same difficulties that all other post-WWI countries faced, and which they did manage to overcome without suicidal social experiments.

The very first decrees of the Bolshevik government after October of 1917 were outwardly democratic. At the same time, these were the first steps in a new type of dictatorship disguised as people's power. To be successful, it needed, above all, the revolution in morality. "All-including, universal flexibility of all concepts, flexibility achieving the level of coincidence, even identity of the opposites: that is the essence!", so did Lenin explain the power of Hegelian-Marxist dialectics. All his philosophical "insights", including the choice of not very much popular Hegel's conception, were aimed at "scientifically" substantiating total flexibility of principles in politics, social relationships and state management<sup>1</sup>.

The social overturn extending to comprise the whole world was to be founded on Lenin's five-item plan for socialist revolution:

(a) Establishing the dictatorship of proletariat and building the new type of state apparatus;

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<sup>1</sup> The Bolshevik ideas bore a fare amount of attractiveness both for frustrated masses and for intellectuals. It is a known fact that, along with other contemporary Western thinkers, F. Scott Fitzgerald expressed great respect for Lenin's personality "unable to put up with proletariat's sufferings" (remarkably, Bertrand Russell, who happened to have met Lenin personally, recalled him as the most ill-intentioned person he had ever met in his life). F. Scott Fitzgerald has responded to the Bolshevism's critics by appraising the October revolution of 1917 and its consequences as "the greatest social experiment in human history".

Lenin's powerful criticism (though also combined with reverence) came from Herbert G. Wells. At their meeting in Russia in 1920, the writer tried to draw his host's attention to the obvious general incongruities and the economic unfeasibility of his agenda. To a quite realistic forecast concerning Russia's development under socialism, 'the greatest teacher of the mankind' responded persuasively with an idyllic picture, which finally made H. G. Wells admit that "this Russian dreamer has lost touch with the ground". The only correction needed be that Lenin was too much down-to-earth, yet he had his ground elsewhere: he knew he dealt with the masses of people out of which charisma-fostered obsession, victimizing and scapegoating could mold anything.

(b) Victory of “the Socialist sector” over multistructuralism in economy;

(c) Extermination of the remnants of exploiter classes and neutralization of their advocates;

(d) People’s upbringing in the spirit of communist world outlook;

(e) Developing an atheist, anti-religious consciousness in people.

The Marxist doctrine of socialism as the initial phase of communism, stated its main objective in abolishing forever exploitation of man by man (it had smartly reserved from saying anything about exploitation of man by the state). As it soon turned out, in all the five items of Lenin’s plan the victory of socialism meant the destruction of natural socio-economic relationships, of both social and individual integrity. All the property was to be de-privatized, nationalized and put under absolute control of the emerging new bureaucracy of state apparatus (*nomenklatura*). The agriculture was forceably collectivized through mass genocide of resilient peasants. Remarkably, when Nazis during the WW2 temporarily occupied the Soviet territory, they did not abolish *Kolhozs* (collective farms) as they saw in them convenient, cheap and easy-to-handle form of manpower exploitation: a kind of agricultural concentration camps<sup>1</sup>.

### **POST-OCTOBER STAGE: TOTALITARIANISM BASED ON VOLUNTARISM**

World War I had triggered social revolutions, along with Russia, in many other European countries, but they all fairly soon returned to traditional models of socio-economic development. In Russia it did not happen for seven more decades. Between the two world wars two junior dinosaurs emerged, German-Italian fascism

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<sup>1</sup> No wonder that the perception grew in the West of the U.S.S.R. as Empire of Evil. Moscow represented the stronghold of the imperialist spirit where every “*bomzh*” (poor person) identified himself with an empire: TV interviews in Moscow streets before the proposed and unrealized 1993 Tokyo summit amazingly revealed more support for not giving the four tiny (and distant-as-moon for most of the Muscovites) Kuril Islands back to Japan, than for getting the country out of a severest economic crisis (where the promised Japanese aid might matter a lot).

and Russian Bolshevism, which, despite Stalin's conciliatory efforts, would not co-exist peacefully. Fostered by unsolved contradictions between the major nation-states, World War I created a new knot of problems that had found their solution in post-World War II European development. Europe had finally found its way; Russia cannot decide up to the present moment.

Just as it was with regard to pre-revolutionary Russia, a legitimate question arises: was the known post-revolutionary development of Russia-turned-Soviet Union inevitable, could it be different if the leaders or conditions or policies were different? Russian journalists and writers of the *perestroika* period (1986-1990) made it fashionable to dig the biographies of Lenin's and Stalin's betrayed (and often executed) confederates, to set up unrealized scenarios of what would the country be like if Trotsky or Zinoviev or Rykov won. The most favorite "ghost ruler" of Russia was Bukharin. In the euphoria of *glasnost* the mentioned writers failed to realize that all these were of the same Bolshevik breed, only less fortunate, and the regime they would choose to set up in Russia would be far from democracy. Rather, it was the regime itself that chose or discarded leaders, and Uncle Joe became and stayed for thirty years "father of all peoples" due to the ruthless logic of self-survival of totalitarianism.

The kernel of the emerging repressive system was the agency initially called GPU, then "chekah" (hence, "chekist" for its members), then NKVD, MGB, and finally, KGB. The legendary figure of an almighty *komissar* (originally a political supervisor for the Red Army units in 1918-1922 Civil War, without whose consent a commander could not decide), became a symbol of the ubiquitous, absolute power of a uniformed man over a civilian one. It seems relevant here to recall another passage from Lenin's "Revolution and the State", one that deals with the state apparatus in a new society. According to Lenin, social revolutions are those that mark replacement of socio-economic formations, and the Socialist revolution differs from any other social revolution exactly in that it cannot utilize old



bureaucracy for the new purposes: it has to destroy it completely, and breed a totally new type of administrator.

The real problem troubling the father-founders was maintenance of the closed and artificial socio-economic structure, unsupported by any traditions of the existing states. "Dictatorship of the proletariat" had promptly transformed into a state-monopolistic bureaucracy, regarding public as its #1 enemy, as a beast to tame. The most basic factor in the process of taming was irrationality of the Regime, and unpredictability of its decisions with regard to its subjects. Regular and random night-time NKVD raids in the 1930s were designed to produce a steady reflex of fear and submission in all layers of social structure. Getting people used to what once felt like deprivation of their human and political rights, the Regime temptingly interpreted it in a Mephistophelic way into liberation from the burden of responsibilities.

According to the Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, the most disastrous outcome of the Soviet system was not socio-political, or economic or even environmental catastrophe: rather, it was an anthropological one. It had substantiated total neglect for the value of human being, and imposed a multiple moral standard on everyone in the society.

When the U.S. movie director Stanley Kramer, highly respected in the Soviet Union for his movies highlighting social and racial problems in America, came to the Moscow International Film Festival in early 1970s, he addressed the Soviet TV audience with the words, "We all must learn to realize the value of a single human being" (clearly having in mind the situation with human rights in the Soviet Union). The Russian translator added to these words "and the mankind as a whole", as without such generalizing supplement the whole phrase did not seem to him to make sense in Russian. This remarkable episode illustrated the typical Soviet mindset towards any individual or a particular case: neglect through generalization. That is, probably, why all the Soviet leaders starting with Nikita Khrushchev, could not suffice with lesser objective than "peace in the whole world".

## KHRUSCHEV, FIRST SOVIET COUP AND THE STAGNATION

Nikita Khrushchev liked to be portrayed by the Soviet propaganda as “indefatigable fighter for peace in the whole world”. He was the first to launch the propagandist campaign for “the universal and total disarmament”: apparently, nothing smaller-scale would count, or, what would really count, might even hinder the intensifying Soviet nuclear armament. Positive reminiscences of that period in the West are mainly caused by parallels with Stalin’s isolationist and repressive regime, which Khrushchev was undoubtedly the first Soviet to dare oppose and criticize openly.

Durability of the popular beliefs has its limits, and the “Kremlin peasant” was smart enough to understand: post-WWI hardships, foreign intervention and the Civil War, famine of the thirties, the Nazi invasion, post-WWII recovery had worked like blessings for the Regime; but this could not last forever. New great perspectives should have been found immediately, and a new enemy to write off all the failures. Anti-Stalinist shock therapy, “communism in twenty years”, “surpassing America in economic growth”, plus launching a Russian spaceman in April 1962 helped restore the internal credibility of the System for a while.

Khrushchev’s rule (1956-1964) had later been quite irrelevantly called “the Khrushchev thaw”: for he never really planned any liberalization of the totalitarianism or any major socio-economic reform, let alone a “new political thinking” Gorbachev finally had to sponsor. No ideological frivolities or political different mindedness were imaginable in those times. Depersonalized rule of all the structures responsible for making decisions, save the Supreme Strategist, a “true Leninist”, hence, infallible by definition, and therefore beyond criticism from below (and there could be nothing above for an atheist mind) had turned the entire socio-political life of a tremendous country into a farce. The actors in the farce were all the members of society, their silenced conscience was a beholder.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> (and last) Edition of Great Soviet Encyclopedia Khrushchev’s rule was described as “one that displayed growing elements

of subjectivism and voluntarism”, for which reason the CPSU Central Committee decided in October 1964 to dismiss its First Secretary (in Russian it sounds like “liberate from” or “relieve of the occupied position”, connotating again with “rescuing from overhanging responsibilities”). The October 1964 events have later been qualified in the West as coup, which Khrushchev’s successors Brezhnev and Kosygin would undoubtedly try to dismiss on the judgment day by referring to the whole Party power structure as usurpatory and basically illegal. The analogy rises with the October (what a mystical month of coups for Russia!) 1993 events when the U.S. news analysts were indulged in a highly academic discussion on whether President Yeltsin’s repressive actions against rebellious yet legitimate leaders of Russian parliament can be justified by universal norms of law. A couple of months later no one argued that they should have been imprisoned, but Yeltsin could not prevent the newly elected Russian parliament from setting them at large again.

Getting back to the Khrushchev period, the society still being under severe psychological pressure of the Stalinist heritage, nobody had any other reference point to balance around but a mythical (guide)“line” relating to an exclusively true to-date interpretation of Marxism Leninism generated by certain institutions in downtown Moscow. The impossibility to discover any regularity within this sort of “dynamic equilibrium”, or its objective verification, would normally suggest of the entire subjectivism of its grounds. Communist ideology virtually represented a pseudo-religious teaching disguised as a popularized version of scientific theory.

Gradually, and mostly under external pressure, the orthodoxy yielded from the 1970s to what may be called a playful conventionalism, resulting in a kind of “structural equilibrium” in a strictly stratified society directed by the will of the Communist Party *Politburo*. The absurdity of the situation, when a Communist Party supreme leader is automatically and permanently (till death do them part) head of all branches and levels of the state power, was obvious to everyone. Through the force of a single party system’s logic, any management was bound to turn into an idolatry, and the citizens

had to exercise their common sense by daily adjusting to Pravda's directives on how much is two times two today.

All the ideologic and bureaucratic follies did not finally bring the society to mass psychosis and social disintegration largely due to one powerful factor. The mass psychology inside the country was strongly mythologized by the Soviet Union's image as a besieged bastion of peace and progress, protector of all oppressed peoples and parties in the world (money consuming yet unavoidable role), a vehicle of the new age, and therefore hated by and endangered from all imperialist powers in the world. To endure through all historical challenges and temptations seemed far more fundamental a task than yielding to the decaying, alien and doomed elitary culture of the West. The ultimate reason why all this looked like truth was in the scientific air that existed around Marxism, which made an average Soviet believe that "Marx has scientifically proved that the world evolution has been such and such". Not that Marxism, which permeated all political and social text-books and was compulsory for all schools and colleges, was too seriously taken by the students.

Now, looking back at that period, one cannot help asking questions: Just how could the doctrine so obviously naive, artificial and helpless, a social philosophy so misanthropic, be ever taken for anything so fundamental as to found the whole history of human evolution on it? How could (and why would) the society based on this primitive belief last for over seven decades, obstinately up rolling its Sisyphus stone?

Almost immediate answer is that it was directly appealing to the collective unconscious, justifying and exalting otherwise unrecognizable, unacceptable and repellent manifestations of a lower self in people. Starting from the "natural" right of the poor to expropriate the rich enshrined in Leninist principles of the dictatorship of proletariat, through every loyal Soviet citizen's duty to expose and denounce saboteurs (unincidentally intellectuals, foreigners, industry and agriculture specialists) proclaimed in the chilling 30s, a de-humanized System emerged. Out of a popular revolution grew a renewed and refined imperial spirit.

It was almost impossible for any individual to avoid the grinding stones of Communist ideology and propaganda, and a layman reaction to historical facts like assassination of the Tzar's entire family in 1918, was very indicative. Almost everybody was indifferently appreciative of the objective necessity that led to elimination of "that bad guy's" successors who later might claim their throne back from Bolsheviks. No less indicative was the popular reaction to the Soviet troops' invasion in Czechoslovakia in 1968: if the anonymous polls had been done among Soviet citizens, they would show an amazingly high rating of support for the government's actions: in a popular perception, "we" just could not let the situation in the heart of Europe and near "our" borders go out of control, and could not let "the Prague Spring" leaders get away with this attempt to undermine the unity of the Socialist Bloc.

### **CONSPIRATORIAL MINDSETS AND THE "PROJECTED ENEMY"**

In a popular Soviet spy movie of the early 70s "Seventeen Instants in the Spring", adored by the Brezhnev family, one of the principal characters, Gestapo chief Grupperfuhrer Muller, surprisingly looked like every Soviet's idea of a KGB general. Featuring him in a more realistic manner would make the image less perceptible and the whole movie less successful. In all the movies depicting capitalist lifestyle, one could easily recognize typical darker features of the life in the Soviet Union, which was a genuine Jungian projection of the shadow: isolated Soviet regime composed images of life and human relationships in the West exactly in accordance to its own complexes and subconscious self-image. Rare Soviet tourist groups to the West were strongly warned about foreign secret services hunting for weaker Soviet citizens (especially technical professionals) to make them betray their fatherland in a Faustian manner, and to be prepared to resist all sorts of temptation. Unsurprisingly, things often really happened with the believers, while those who would not believe in this bullshit, usually completed their foreign trip without problems.

Back in their homes, people, presumably out of the scarcity of entertainment, liked to indulge in “high place” anecdotes (the insuperable character in most of them being Brezhnev). Various spy stories also circulated in the stagnation period involving high places, although very rarely a leader of the country. Trading the position (and role) of the emperor for any reason whatsoever seemed absolutely senseless. Yet, even the most stable beliefs are not forever. The most convincing tales are those which are hard to prove or disprove. According to one of them, Mikhail Gorbachev has sold the Soviet Union, along with the rest of the Communist Bloc, to the capitalist West represented by certain U.S. government agencies, for a ridiculous amount of \$25,000,000. The entire *perestroika*, designed to disintegrate the country, was conceived jointly by Gorbachev and George Bush at their informal meetings, back in the years when the first was a rising Kremlin functionnaire, and the other was CIA director.

1997

### A SOVIET PRISONERS' DILEMMA

One of the traditional issues for the problem of incorporating a post totalitarian or newly independent state into the community of civilized countries is a sacramental question of the political prisoners. It looks like a litmus test for a civilized outsider to inquire whether a state is able to cope with the diversity of opinions and the organized (or organizable) opposition without resorting to repressions. The Soviet Union had always been a classic case of a totalitarian style of treatment for all its disobedient and/or discontent, let alone dissidents. Everyone in the country, down to the extremely retarded individuals, knew in his bones he dealt with a kind of regime he could not fool around with. Ninety-nine percent of the Soviet citizens of mid 80s would totally dismiss any possibility of sponsored reforms exceeding cosmetic repairs of the System.

Then there came Mikhail Gorbachev, the man who aimed to change his own country, but who had changed the world instead. Gorbachev's dilemma was whether to glory behind the decaying yet

durable walls of “the empire of evil”, or jump into the unpredictability of democratic reforms. It undoubtedly required courage on his part to take the latter choice. And on that way the painful issue of political prisoners and dissidents had to be dealt with. Some of them were concentrated in Lubyanka and other prisons in and outside Moscow, others were exiled to distant provincial cities. Released by Gorbachev, many of them became involved with then radical yet constructive wing of the Russian democratic movement, the brightest name in this spectrum being the repressed academician Andrei Sakharov, earlier known as “the father of the Soviet H-bomb”.

Others, as soon as they got released from KGB prisons and surveillance, started to stimulate and direct uncompromising nationalist movements in the Union republics. The status of a former repressed dissident and, particularly, that of a political prisoner was of special value for the post-totalitarian mass perception and for the role of popular leader (Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia being a better example in this plethora). A few of the former Soviet political prisoners, like Zviad Gamsakhurdia and some of his confederates in Georgia, later proved to have been driven by nothing but enormous ambition.

In the meanwhile, the economic situation in the country was further deteriorating. The more the world applauded to the historic decisions of liberation of Eastern Europe, unification of Germany, ending cold war and converting the nuclear industry, the more people’s life in the U.S.S.R. got miserable and the future prospect uncertain. Ordinary citizens bitterly called themselves local hostages of global breakthrough. Looking back at those years, it is hard to imagine how liberalization of the regime could have been combined with the rapid economic growth or, at least, stable and painless transition. But the society’s expectations (encouraged by the leader himself) were exactly such as to eventually determine the negative popular perception of Gorbachev’s policies and personality which persists in Russia to the present day.

## SECOND SOVIET COUP, DEATH OF EMPIRE AND THE RISE OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM

Gorbachev's Achilles's heal was his umbilical cord with the party nomenklatura which he would not give up. Disintegration of the country was also something unthinkable for him, but he actually moved towards giving the Union republics more and more sovereignty, until the compromised version of the Union Treaty, scheduled to be signed August 20, 1991, was supposed to have marked a final stage in development of Novo-Ogaryovo process with which Gorbachev identified his reform to a great extent. This was the plan of turning the Soviet Union into "a new type of federation" giving its members the rights equal to those of confederation of states. This plan appalled both hard-liner Communists and the emerging nationalist leaders in the republics. Communists called this plan a virtual disintegration of the country. Nationalists qualified it as a disguise for reviving the "modernized Russian empire" out of the decaying Union.

August 18, 1991, while president Gorbachev was on vacation in Crimea, a group of highest position, led by vice-president Gennadi Yanayev, introduced the state of emergency in the whole country, and proclaimed itself the supreme temporary power (so-called GKCP). The goal was to prevent the process of disintegration (Baltic states and Georgia have already proclaimed independence by that time), and to restore the orthodox Soviet rule. The attempt of coup was defeated in the Muscovites' popular uprising, and the perpetrators imprisoned. Gorbachev was rescued by his arch-rival Yeltsin's closest confederate Rutskoi who will raise a coup against him in October 1993. But the president was doomed. Three months later his liberator managed to terminate existence of the Soviet Union.

At the most crucial moment the System had worked against itself: if it was not in the bureaucratic traditions of Soviet leadership to promote weak but excessively obsequious people, someone brighter than Yanayev might lead the coup, and the plot might be more successful.

1997



Among various comments on and versions of the August 1991 events that filled the world media in those days, Georgian president Gamsakhurdia's version stood out (like most of his other statements): behind the whole plot stood... Gorbachev himself, hiding out in his *dacha* to preserve his democratic image in the West, and pulling strings at the same time to restore the old repressive regime in the country. Conspiratorial syndrome was manifest once again: Russia was seen as a biblical beast, impossible to destroy and unable to humanize; all the liberalizations, reforms, even the staged coups could only serve to dangerously disguise its growing aggressiveness.

However, the Soviet Union has ended by the end of 1991, and the history of new Russia has started. A little later the opposition in Georgia has ousted the president Gamsakhurdia, and Eduard Shevardnadze returned to his embattled native republic. Contrary to his predecessor, Shevardnadze invited all competing political forces (with the only exception for Gamsakhurdia's notorious Helsinki Union/Free Georgia) to share the newly elected parliament and mark the final reconciliation. But just like elsewhere in post-imperial space, contradictions were too deep to overcome rapidly.

Almost immediately the struggle for complete control over their newly independent countries turned yesterday's confederates into enemies. Confrontation between the legislative and executive powers in Russian leadership, personified by Yeltsin vs Khasbulatov duel prior to the October 1993 attempt of coup, was suspiciously outspoken, outrageous, and noisy. Could it be just a performance to increase the West's concern about stability and the aid for democratic reforms in Russia? Everybody wondered whether Khasbulatov, for any reason whatsoever, could deliberately create a grotesque figure of anti reformist retrograde, just to fulfill his role in this game? There was a remarkable analogy between the parliamentary crises in Russia and in Georgia: outwardly composed of radically different individuals and parties, both represented the incompetent and unscrupulous groups trying to undermine a reformist head of state. Boris Yeltsin has at that time displayed both power and determination to neutralize destructive forces in his parliament, causing

controversial comments in the West. Eduard Shevardnadze had to display the lack of both, to a certain detriment of stability in his country, in order to keep fitting into an image of a democratic ruler. Only after the elections of November 1995 did the Georgian president consolidate his power enough to strengthen people's hopes for the country's sustainable future.

### **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ISOLATIONISM**

The post-Soviet political psychology makes everyone identify a country and its policies with the personality of its leader. Too many lapses in the last years international relations have been caused by identification of Russian strategies, policies and interests with the existing image of the Russian president.

Nobody in the world will be able to analyze, predict or effectively react to the situation in and the policies of post-Soviet countries if the figures of leaders are not considered within the context of three forces that greatly influence decision-making process: (i) pressure from the closest circle of their advisors and executives, (ii) sentiments that dominate a given society (including those based on stereotypes), often inconsistent and mutually contradictory, (iii) ethnopolitical situation in the country, especially violent conflicts maintained with outside assistance. It will not be an exaggeration to say that both Russia and Georgia, on incomparable scales and given the whole enormous difference between them, have given the world the most characteristic examples of post-totalitarian development.

**1997**

# 1997

George Khutsishvili (ICCN)

Ethnicity and Democracy in Georgia: Rivals or Allies?  
A Historical Perspective

EIGHT SCENARIOS RE ABKHAZIA

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, 1997.

Georgia to democratic future. The process was hindered for the next

## ETHNICITY AND DEMOCRACY IN GEORGIA: RIVALS OR ALLIES? A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

### **GENERAL PROBLEMS OF POST-TOTALITARIAN INTER-ETHNIC DEVELOPMENTS (THE CASE OF GEORGIA)**

The 1918 Act of Independence was the first to open the door for Georgia to democratic future. The process was hindered for the next seven decades by the Soviet totalitarian rule, but now it is in the Georgian society's hands to make the process of democratization irreversible. Among the priority issues in building a democratic independent statehood is creation of a secure and stable future for all citizens.

A nation that seeks/gains independence from a larger power always assumes that its national minorities should share this cause, although it is very often exactly the opposite. Transition to new and inexperienced intrastate relationships always contains a high degree of threat perception for non-titular ethnic groups who feel endan-

gered and may seek autonomy, secession, or protection from a friendly power. Separatism is wide spread especially in post-imperial formations, and ethno-territorial conflicts turn into legal deadlocks. It takes a long time till a new and harmonized system of inter-ethnic relationships replaces the collapsed one in a newly independent nation. The crucial moment here is not just in adopting norms and principles of civil society for which a post-imperial/post-colonial nation is generally unprepared. Building a democratic civil society is unimaginable without sharing a system of values characteristic of any developed human community. Another problem is that in a post-totalitarian transition such an evolution cannot precede relevant economic and social developments which may develop painfully and hinder the democratic process accordingly.

1997

### **TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE INTERPRETATION OF NATION**

Among the most important steps in building a democratic civil society is public acknowledgement and appreciation of all citizens, regardless of their ethnic identity, as identifiable with the nation. Formal equality of human rights is enshrined in all newly adopted constitutions. Yet there is a distance to cover from a theoretical acceptance to practical realization of the right of your ethnically different neighbor to be chosen for the same vacant job position in your country that you are applying for.

“Nation” in the post-Soviet mentality is traditionally understood in the same sense as Westerners would understand “ethnicity”, although no titular ethnic group would agree to identify itself as an “ethnic group”, which is regarded as a “lower-grade”, even a humiliating qualification. And using the word “nation-state” often creates misunderstandings, as this should in post-Soviet understanding essentially mean an ethnocratic state system. Post-Soviet societies slowly come to realization of the basic principles of civil society.

This process is particularly important for Georgia. Georgia is a multiethnic country. It was a multiethnic country in 1918 when it first proclaimed independence from a collapsed Tsarist empire. It

was even more diversified a country in 1991 when the Soviet empire collapsed. Historically Georgia was known as tolerant and hospitable place from which there has been little emigration. E.g. Jewish settlements were known for almost twenty-six centuries in the sub-region without any cases of repression recorded. Active geopolitical location of Georgia and the expansive policies of neighboring larger powers (Turkey, Persia, later Russia) increased the existing ethnic diversity in the region to the highest. Now the most numerous national minorities in Georgia are Armenians, Azeris and Russians (in the latter Ukrainians are often indistinguishable). Abkhazians and Ossets were the ethnic groups characterized with highest degree of tension in relationships with ethnic Georgians since 1990. Degree of communication and the prospect of reconciliation are at the moment much higher with former South Ossetia than with Abkhazia. The breakaway Abkhazia problem, and a peaceful and efficient solution to the Abkhaz-Georgian ethno-territorial dispute are the number one priority issues for the immediate future of Georgia.

The Abkhaz have stressed their ethnic difference from Georgians as the conflict developed. It took time since the dispute over the Abkhazia problem lasts in the Georgian society to fully realize the Abkhaz are not ethnic Georgians. If the Georgian-Abkhaz dispute ends constructively in incorporating Abkhazia in the Georgian federal state, it will also take time for the society to realize that Georgians are as much Georgians as Abkhaz are, as well as all other citizens of Georgia belonging to various ethnic and national groups that make "the people of Georgia".

13 October, 1997

Georgia and the Caucasus in Transition:  
The Security Aspects

1997

I. Legal Aliens to Democracy, or the NIS Paradox

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, 13 October, 1997.

## GEORGIA AND THE CAUCASUS IN TRANSITION: THE SECURITY ASPECTS

### I. LEGAL ALIENS TO DEMOCRACY, OR THE NIS PARADOX BALITNESS AS AN INTERIM TRANSITIONAL GOAL

Everybody knows that the New Independent States are in transition. The following post-Soviet nations would like to be recognized as prospectively European (which would mean being not only geographically, but also culturally, politically, and legally part of Europe): Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan. Russia considers herself a Europe-by-definition, as well as Asia-by-definition. The still hugest country on the world map understandably differs in this regard from the rest of NIS. Russia was not really “one of the Soviet nations”, could never liberate from her domineering (including Soviet) global self-image personified by her recently restored state emblem featuring a double-headed eagle who cannot give up either of its Euro-Asian claims. Among the aforementioned nations, correctness of inclusion of Azerbaijan in the list might raise some doubts, if not for the oil that is fuelling western drives in Azeri

orientation. Situation with Azerbaijan cannot be clarified by usually made comparisons with Turkey who never demonstrated readiness to altogether alter its Asian profile, and has sought Europeanness mainly in the functional sense of the word.

Strange though it may sound, it was the unifying Soviet rule that has imposed European attitudes on most of the republics. European-styled Soviet cultural and behavioral standards, utilizing the classic Russian cultural traditions, have contributed significantly to the cultural formation of the Union republics, natural to most of the above nations, artificial to and imposed on the Central Asian nations who never quite identified yet complied with it out of the necessity to follow the rules of the game of survival. South Caucasus has been a region diversified in itself yet growing in its European orientation, in which Christian (since AD 334) Armenia is special for the political ties with Russia, moderately Islamic Azerbaijan is building bridges to Europe while maintaining its Central Asian cultural ties, while Georgia (Christianized between AD 325 and AD 337) is seeking any ties on the Western side of the globe, trying at the same time to reasonably appease the “Big Bear”.

The sinuous ways of post-Soviet transition are manifest in that South-Caucasian way to Europe seems to be lying through the Baltics. To give a conceptual attempt of clarifying the matter with the Europe-seeking NIS without unduly dismissing it, let us consider their virtual future in what might be called “greater Europe”. Any of the aforementioned NIS are dreaming of full “citizenship” in the unified Europe, but are really only eligible for a “legal alien” status: i.e. an open door (with no guarantees) which may any moment slam before their nose if they fail to satisfy some explicit or implicit criteria. Understanding very well there is a hyperspatial distance they have to shortcut to reach Western Europe, the South-Caucasian nations would at least like to create special relationships with it by co-operating in EU and NATO structures, participating in as many programs as possible, etc., but most of all by acquiring a specialty which would allow them to be perceived as “young European brothers”. For an example, the Baltics case is being usually brought up.

Let us point at the features that even in the Soviet times distinguished the Baltic nations, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, from the rest of the Soviet constituent republics. Something made them eligible for being considered prospectively part of Europe as soon as the decline of the Soviet system became visible, and for being detached from Russia and CIS by a “real border” as soon as the empire collapsed. Baltics have always been special in the USSR not only for their geostrategic location on the map, but even more so by their European mentality and life-style, and the cultural closeness from the empire. Their late (pre-World War II) incorporation in the USSR fails to explain all, as e.g. most part of Western Ukraine was incorporated in the USSR in the same period as the Baltics yet would never rank with them. Despite the considerable Soviet-created Russian diasporas, the Baltics even managed to use their Soviet statehoods for consolidation in their anti-Soviet development: something Western Ukraine, although playing a major role in Ukraine’s struggle for independence and promoting the Belovezhskaya Pushcha decisions of December 1991, definitely lacked (and was finally balanced by the Russified eastern regions of the country).

1997

South-Caucasus nations have been trying to satisfy their immediate security needs by means of appeasing the Russian strategic interest by maintaining a tolerable Russian military presence in the region. Not being able yet to secure their borders and settle internal disputes, Georgia and Azerbaijan would see their long-term security guarantee in having a treaty-based Western protection and a “real border” with the big northern neighbor, while Armenia (being naturally detached by having no common border with Russia) would perceive the same as a security risk. Armenians, although no less determined to ensure their independent statehood, are trying to maintain it through strategic partnership with Russia, even at the risk of alienation from the rest of the Caucasus.

Thus, more (if at all sufficiently) realistic thinkers in the South Caucasus visualize their way into the West via Balticness via Eastern-Europeanness via Central-Europeanness. What they fail to realize is a rigidity of the Western perception of CIS nations as de-



scendents of totalitarian spirit, comparable to the post-World War II Americans' perception of Germans as Nazis. Bulgaria or Romania may not evince more "Europeanness" in the above sense than the Caucasus, yet they do have to their credit a psychologically important fact that they have never been part of the Soviet empire (as if Ceausescu's regime was less destructive to the spirit), and a geostrategically important fact that they are closer to the European Union on the map. So, they do not need an interim "green light" of Balticness which may be a harder thing to achieve for the Caucasus peoples than liberation from the Soviet rule.

Will the "legal alien" status become permanent for the Europe-seeking newly independent nations? On the one hand, there is an increasing interest in the Caucasus world wide related to the prospect of Caspian oil transportation to the West, the "Eurasian corridor", "the great Silk Route", etc. Georgia under President Shevardnadze has achieved the reputation of a country able to maintain its stability despite unsolved disputes. On the other hand, a prospect of incorporation of Central-, Eastern-European and Baltic states in NATO may bring nearer the time when the East-West security border dividing Russian and Western spheres of influence, and expanded to distinguish more promising post-Communist regions from less promising ones, will coincide with the present CIS borders, thus deepening the gap between East and West the whole post-Communist global transformation was expected to bridge.

### **THE CAUCASUS PHENOMENON**

The Caucasus is a highly diversified multiethnic area of the former Soviet Union, located between the Black and Caspian Seas and linking Russia with the Middle East. Its strategic, inter-cultural and interreligious location has historically made this region a front-line for numerous wars and violent conflicts. Russian-dominated since mid-nineteenth century, the area has decomposed with the collapse of the Soviet Union into three independent states – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (known collectively under the name of Cau-

casia, or, from the Russian perspective, Transcaucasia, or recently, South Caucasus,). Azerbaijan and especially Georgia are decidedly multiethnic, unlike almost monoethnic Armenia landlocked further to the south.

The smaller Caucasus nationalities like the Chechens, Ingush, Adyghs, Lezgins, Cherkess, Balkars, Avars (with Ossets or Alans standing out) are much more closely related to one another than to either of the three major Caucasus nations south of them. These have remained constituent parts within the Russian Federation, with greater or lesser degree of autonomy preserved. Abkhazians, though claiming to be descendants of ancient tribes present in the Black Sea coastal region from Antique times, acknowledge however their kinship with relatively younger North-Caucasus tribes, especially Adyghs, much to the benefit of Georgian historians who refuse to accept both truths at the same time. The Russian North-Caucasus autonomous regions (divided from Georgia and Azerbaijan by the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range) have also been rapidly growing in their national identity, led of course by Chechens who remain involved in their treacherous bid for independence from the Russian Federation.

In spite of its seemingly marginal position in the post-Soviet space, the Caucasus has repeatedly attracted international concern in the 90s over the civil wars and coups in Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Azeri-Armenian war over the Nagorno Karabakh enclave (the most protracted conflict in the FSU), and the high-intensity conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Ingushetia, and Chechnya (more correctly, Chechenia). Since December 1994, the latter conflict grew into an open confrontation with central Russian authorities as the Yeltsin administration tried to press rebellious former Soviet Airborne General Dzhokhar Dudayev, the late president of the self-proclaimed Chechen State, into submission and recognition of the Russian jurisdiction over Chechenia. The armed conflict was terminated in summer of 1996, while Russians had to submit to the Chechen terms of armistice. December 1994 for the first time illustrated a horrible prospect of a Caucasian war involving Russia

in a new Afghanistan-style protracted conflict, with consequences disastrous to Russia's territorial integrity, and unpredictable in their impact upon international security.

### **PLAYERS AND THEIR INTERESTS**

The Caucasus stands out in the long list of troubled spots on the post-Soviet map. In recent years, it has looked like nothing more than a cluster of ethnic wars, high- and low-intensity conflicts, and zones of social unrest. Now, on the contrary, most world conflict maps depict this region among conflict-free zones (!) which may be true only if we include bloodshed in indispensable elements of the definition of conflict.

However, despite the notorious protracted conflicts over Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and also the North Ossetia/Ingushetia dispute over "Prigorodny Raiyon", the Caucasus was long of only marginal area in the spectrum of world politics – that is, until the really explosive potential of the region became manifest since: (a) the war in Chechnya has shocked the world with its intensity and ruthlessness, and (b) the Caspian oil issue has impacted world economic priorities, therefore, in a sinuous way, helping to terminate the Chechen war.

It has long been clear that without factoring in what each of the major players in the region considers to be their indispensable strategic interests, it is impossible to achieve lasting peace in the Caucasus. Co-operation between the three Transcaucasian states – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – has always been understood as the number one issue. Even so, approaches to this goal have been as varying in all three states. Georgia's first post-Communist ethnonationalist leadership tried to promote an idea of "the Caucasian Home" for the indigenous nations in the region that totally disregarded Russia's interest. The failure of ethnonationalist regimes in almost all post-Soviet states marked the transition to a new stage of rationalisation of national goals and perspectives. Georgia's President Eduard Shevardnadze has several times tried

to promote the idea of a peaceful Caucasus based on similarity between or coincidence of interests of all the nations and ethnic groups that inhabit the region, and in accordance with strategic interests of the neighbouring large powers. Nations and peoples that have interacted over such a historically considerable period, and thus have very much in common, should more easily become partners in building their independent statehood and defence partnership. Termination of the war in Chechnia in summer of 1996, Russia's compliance with the Chechen-induced terms of subsequent relationships, above all, Russian public opinion's reaction to all this showed the prospect of ratio winning upon will in post-Soviet affairs. Yet the unrelenting Abkhaz and Karabakh disputes have demonstrated that Russia's rational approach to the Caucasus problems is very slow to materialise.

1997

However, a large share of the problems faced by post-Soviet Caucasus are internally induced, and would arise despite the policies of greater powers. Along with the inevitable post-totalitarian transition problems, this includes the impact of ethnic psychologies and national cultures, especially traditions like the Caucasus "code of dignity" reminiscent in some features of classic medieval chivalry but essentially an Eastern blend. A genuine and authentic Caucasus-ness is perfectly manifest in both Russian- and Georgian-side mountaineous areas of the Caucasus, weakening as we move from mountain to plain and from country to town in mainland, and as we move from Georgia to Azerbaijan, with its weakest forms found in Armenia. The Caucasus has always been specific but preserved its identity in a kind of Soviet-guarded "national park". As soon as people at last felt on their own and faced the world in the last decade of the twentieth century, the problems of understanding and accommodation were bound to show.

## **II. RUSSIA AND CIS: A GRAND POWER DISILLUSIONMENT THE PHANTOM OF THE POLE**

Apparently, Russia has problems about accepting new realities, and the process of post-totalitarian transition is more complicated for her than for most other post-Soviet states. The most painful moment in the entire post-Soviet transition for Russia has been accommodation to the fact that it is just another country on the map, although a huge one. Every nation is seeking ways to grow stronger and more influential than it is. Russia never really cared about developing a democratic system, but prior to the Soviet rule she was at least exemplary in the world for cultural achievements (rather than for a remarkable size), like excellent literature and music, essentially making for developing democratic values in society. Yet, when possessing the assets to destroy or to irreparably pollute the planet is the only convincing argument available to be listened to globally, the only reasonable strategy is to moderate the ambitions of a superpower.

As soon as the Ken Waltz-styled structural-realistic constructions lost their relevance to the political reality, Russia had a difficult problem of adapting a new and less prestigious place in an emerging system of international relations, unavoidable with regard to the critical state of her economy. Feeling phantom pains in the extremities gone, the former empire has unsuccessfully been trying to persuade the world it still is, in some sense, a pole. Regrettably, Russia seems to have also been overlooking on this way the opportunities that often accompany the crises.

### **RUSSIA AND THE NATO EXPANSION: FIGHTING WINDMILLS OR GAINING POINTS?**

The attitude the West-aided post-Soviet Russia evinces towards its main former adversary NATO is indicative. Russia's attitude towards the NATO expansion to the East may be understandable in terms of hard positional bargaining. What represents a puzzle for the analysts, is the public sentiment that feeds the continuous and

apparently illogical game of confrontation with the West as essentially alien and hostile world, and especially with the United States as a center of world-dominating ambition under the disguise of democracy and free market. Leaving alone the ethical side of this issue, this might be understandable only if Russia had something better to offer to the world, conceptually at least. Nobody in Russia argues any more that this country represents a global leader in implementing of a populist ideology allegedly based on “the only true and scientifically valid” philosophy. Russia does not even have a pronounced recognition as a leader from any group of the so-called near-abroad (CIS) countries. All post-Soviet nations are painfully trying now to assimilate the economic and political system that most other nations in the world have built decades ago.

Let us see how the Russian reaction to the NATO expansion issue can be interpreted in terms of bargaining. Being aware of her very limited capability to divert the Western-designed strategic process, Russia is allegedly trying to offer a deal which would allow her to be granted the most decisive voice possible in any international structures where she agrees to participate, to increase the Western assistance, and to be given a free hand in the post-Soviet space, in turn for a blind eye to Eastern-European involvement in NATO. The only exception from this scheme may be Ukraine, strategically fit to play a decisive role in the entire post-Soviet space. Having Ukraine, a spacy, resourceful and fertile land protruded into Europe, integrated into Russia has always been a goal of tremendous strategic importance for Russia. Likewise, the independence of Ukraine since December of 1991 has been perceived in Russia as a serious security risk, while most New Independent States, on the contrary, considered it as their major security guarantee, able to prevent the scenario of post-Soviet reintegration under Russian dominance from materialization.

Nevertheless, submitting to the Russian plan might turn to be a tempting decision for the U.S. and NATO, in view of rapid developments in the current candidates Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic, with Slovakia, Croatia, Slovenia, maybe also Bulgaria, along

with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as next in line. In such a case the future Russian security border may finally coincide with the borders of the former Soviet Union minus Baltic States. The bottom line of the current Russian policy is that this should happen only if integrative processes under Russian dominance within the entire FSU, starting from the European part of it, grow to a sufficient extent in the nearest decade. Recent energetic efforts of Russia to politically and economically integrate Belarus, an economically risky affair in itself, were designed to create a precedent of such integration in CIS. Above all, it was only a prelude to facilitating a really strategically important integration process with Ukraine, a development which might make the West negatively reconsider its assistance plans for Russia.

Under these circumstances, the only wise attitude for Russia would be to build credit and confidence with the new and more powerful partners by assuring them that a new member's only ambition is to grow enough to constructively blend, to everybody's benefit, with the system that has proven to be more successful than any other in the world. Instead, there is a visible discomfort in Russia about any kind of the NATO and U.S. activeness in the CIS. The U.S. is seen as a sole remaining global pole, taking maximum advantage of the status quo through "its military tool" NATO, a protruding weapon against the East. A general tragic tone about the post-Communist transition in Russian media, as well as academia is as if good has already been defeated, and evil has won in a fatal global battle. It would be unjust however not to notice millions of rationally minded people in Russia which do not fit into this picture, but the reality is that they do not in any way affect the political and ideological climate in their country.

Rationally speaking, should Russia have essential problems about accepting, or at least, assuming new realities and new roles, accordingly? Would it imply any painful alterations in the current far- or near-abroad policies or long-term strategic planning for Russia, if this country willingly changed its attitudes? Most probably, not. One cannot help compare the defeated post-World War II Japan's

rational approach to its relationships with the former enemy the U.S., which certainly cannot be explained away in a primitive stereotypical manner, like “Japanese are just smarter than Russians”.

Then, what can be the cultural-psychological bases for Russia’s counter-productive and, apparently, self-damaging ideology today? To throw some light on that, it is necessary to get past one painful issue: what can really be rationally meant when speaking “Russia wants this” or “Russia does that”, or more correctly, who is in charge in Russia today? If you ask an average educated person in Russia with more or less unbiased attitudes and some analytical abilities, his/her answer will probably be that several powerful groups, combining persons/subgroups in and outside government, are sharing, competing for and manipulating power in Russia. Russian tradition has always been a neglect of public opinion, so neither of these groups in power cares in the least about how their policies are perceived domestically or abroad: all they are interested in is the maximum profit they can squeeze out of existing messy conditions in the country. No system of values is shaping for a new Russia, and no one in a huge state seems to really care about building a credible political reputation for him/herself or for someone else, a situation which disastrously affects the political climate in the country every time the President’s health or position looks endangered. Thus, we do not go very far from the initial point of our analysis if we attempt to see things *ex parte interna*.. Unless we want to indulge in non-productive explanations involving a “mysterious Russian soul”.

1997

### **RUSSIA DEFINED IN TERMS OF VIRTUAL REALITY**

The truth may after all lie in admitting that a “standard Russian”, a common denominator of all popular beliefs, ambitions and fears, is the one in charge of policy-making in Russia. Every real-life personality in charge of any position to lose, is afraid of confronting that formidable “virtual reality” character. This may happen to a country with “a debilitic” power system, or to a nation with a specific mass consciousness. The core of that character’s standpoint is



reminiscence of the great-power ideology, a phantom of domination that has fed the imperial spirit in Russia for centuries.

In this context, what can be the rationale behind the Russian reaction to the issue of NATO expansion to the East? Imagine we are listening to what this virtual reality character has to say. We have for centuries been a great power, and at the same time a victim of our geostrategic position on the map. Europe has flourished largely because it was shielded by Russia from Asian invaders who instead have repeatedly devastated the Russian land. Out of all historic disasters and cataclysms, we have created a state structure where, for the first time in history, the idea of justice was blended with the idea of equality in distribution of welfare, and stability in people's life prospect. Without a Soviet contribution, the Allies would never beat Nazis in World War II, which might have hindered the global evolution process. We still possess the number of nuclear warheads enough to destroy the planet. We occupy a territory incomparably larger than any other country in the world. Yet we are being spoken to like an inferior nation, like there has not been a time when the U.S. treated us as the only matching counterpart. If not for the West's agent Gorbachev who started the destructive process, and Yeltsin who had completed this process, the Soviet Union would have continued to exist, and appall the West.

This monologue is, of course, grotesque, yet it is voiced and echoed in virtually every official statement or analytical comment in Russia, let alone the media, and is so far not balanced by a single realistic domestically made self-criticism.

Obviously, it has already been an enormous concession to a "hostile environment" in a standard Russian's view that the Soviet Union and the whole Warsaw Pact seized to exist. Should not the West be as grateful to Yeltsin and company for that concession as to economically support the post-Soviet Russia indefinitely? The so-called "new Russians" are too scanty to make for serious transformations in public consciousness which continues to be fragmented. Yet larger and larger numbers of Russians, especially younger ones,

start to realize their choice can be both rational and compatible with new reality.

### **THE END OF THE COMMONWEALTH, THE START OF THE AGE OF AXES AND CORRIDORS**

A similar problem applies to the Russian attitudes, perceptions and policies in the so-called near abroad, i.e. towards the former Soviet republics. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was designed in Moscow as a deterring mechanism to prevent further dissolution of the remnants of empire. Upgrading of this tool should have turned it into an efficient re-integration and re-unification mechanism for getting the former Soviet republics together again under the Russian dominance. Great bulk of the Western economic assistance for the FSU going to support, and supposedly, to democratize Russia, should have been a crucial supporting factor here. If this plan was considered appallingly realistic by many immediately after the collapse of the USSR, now it is being assessed as having little prospect to materialize. Although, again with a Western assistance, the latter view may also be soon fading away. What kind of Western assistance is meant this time? This may be a fatal mistake in dealing with the NATO expansion issue, namely, abandoning the NIS, especially the hottest spot B the Caucasus, to Russia at the price of the Russian compliance with the NATO expansion to the European borders of the FSU, and a subsequent incorporation of former Communist Central Europe in EU.

Certainly this is a bottom line for Russia, but how much is it feasible? The CIS has proven its inefficiency as a global integration tool, giving rise to small, functionally and practically determined groupings, while the Russian leadership is trying to find ways to revive the Commonwealth. The south-eastern arch via Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan, is one of such groupings marking the skeleton of the Eurasian corridor to facilitate the East-West trade/economic transactions via Black and Caspian seas.

The local, or subregional tools of influence left for Russia to maintain her dominance in the post-Soviet space include the protracted ethnic and territorial disputes, like those in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Otherwise Russia would not maintain the costly peace-keeping forces in the conflict zones, formally sponsored by the UN Security Council's decisions. I will try to analyze below what may be expected in the zones of conflict to impact in the coming decade the post-Soviet security strategies in one of the four suggested ways.

### **III. GEORGIA: LEGACY, REALITY, AND THE SCENARIOS GUARDING INNER SECURITY BORDERS**

The impaired territorial integrity is not the same for Georgians as the loss of territories traditionally was for Russians until the Chechen war had for the first time questioned the immediacy of this value on a national scale. The nation's, especially a smaller and newly independent one's concern for its territorial integrity should be quite an understandable one. For the Georgian nation who has in addition been historically war-torn, external Muslim-dominated for prolonged periods, and identity-ridden for almost two centuries of Russian/Soviet rule, the issue has become particularly sensitive. In the Georgian case though it had a special strain caused by the inter- and intra-ethnic diversity traditionally characteristic of this land, with a considerable number of minorities' compact settlements and three Soviet-established autonomous formations (a considerable number for a small country like Georgia). The Russian factor, promoted to the ranks of black magic in mass mentality in its ability to produce and manipulate ethnic conflicts, was another factor reinforcing a perception of threat from the minorities.

That is, probably, the main reason for a phobic fear of federalism perceived in Georgian mass mentality as a sort of state-sponsored way to self-liquidation. A natural yet appalling implication being that people would feel sufficiently secure under a moderately nationalist authoritarian rule in a unitary state structure, rather than a liberal power system characteristic of modern democracies. A fear

of decentralization of power, and delegating significant prerogatives to local elected authorities (as the current discussion of choice between elected and appointed local administration shows) means essentially lack of faith in viability of the state and its future.

The problem of territorial integrity has become crucial for the consciousness of post-Soviet Georgians. The limits of nationhood have been identified in people's minds with state borders of the country, and the immediate threat to Georgia's territorial integrity the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts have posed has been identified with the externally imposed challenge (not an inner crisis!) to the national identity. Even now Georgians are very reluctant in naming the recent split in the nation caused by the ethnonationalistic ideology among the conflict-escalating factors, which obviously means many of them feel more confident attributing the crisis only to the external factors: externalization of inner crisis in order to avoid a painful discovery that the nation has an identity problem.

1997

### **SHEVARDNADZE'S EXPERIMENT AND THE CAUCASUS MENTALITY**

Back in the pre-Gorbachev Soviet times, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia Comrade Eduard Shevardnadze was credited for being experimenter and innovator of the Soviet economic system (in fact, he even visioned Gorbachev's reform as development of his earlier experiments). Now the former Soviet Foreign Minister and current President of Georgia Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, respected in the West and hated by Russian military as Gorbachev's closest partner in dismantling the Soviet Block and the Iron Curtain, is trying to upgrade his country's image to the European compatibility standards. Is it possible though to found a country's image on the image of its leader? For one thing, Georgia had been very little known to the outside world before Shevardnadze came back to lead his newly independent country, after a short but noisy ethnonationalist domination period in 1990-1991 broke into a civil war between Georgians, and caused ethnic clashes

in the South Ossetia region of Georgia. Energetic efforts of Shevardnadze's brought international recognition to his country. Even after the conflict in the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic in Georgia grew into a war, and the Russian-aided Abkhaz proclaimed independence from Georgia, the international community never questioned the issue of territorial integrity of Georgia.

The period between 1995 and 1997 turned out to be of particular significance for Georgia's stability. It sounds like a miracle but Georgia is slowly recovering, and the Russian spell does not seem to have been worth casting. It is fairly quiet and safe in most part of the country, and there are no visible signs of social tension in the people who still have to put up with autumn-to-spring shortages in power supply and delays of miserable salary throughout the year. Much of this miracle has to be credited to one person's – President Eduard Shevardnadze's – impact, along with the massive humanitarian assistance and Western credits for Georgia in the recent years induced by his name (although other factors also counted, like expectations linked with the Caspian oil pipeline issue, or the impact and aftermath of the Chechen war). The critical mass was created by a synergy of two simultaneous factors – the Western effort to prevent a Russian dominated reintegration scenario from developing, and the Georgian leader's determination to confirm his legendary reputation by bringing his country out of the crisis. The President has masterly managed to use his rivals' mistakes and failures, including an August 1995 assault, to finally strengthen his position and avert the growing threat of organized crime from the country, after which people have started to believe that law and order was possible in Georgia. Georgian authorities led by Shevardnadze managed to avert the danger of "crudely" organized crime, yet the country remains liable to more sophisticated forms of corruption, may be even not perceived as such in post-Soviet mentality.

The problem of breakaway Abkhazia still remains a number-one obstacle to a decidedly positive evaluation of Shevardnadze's role in Georgian history. Roughly 250,000 IDPs and refugees are waiting to return home. The tired Georgian people are just waiting for the

Georgian state jurisdiction to be restored in Abkhazia, and for the whole issue to close on that. In such a case, a number two obstacle should naturally remain the breakaway South Ossetia, but it is not. Surprisingly, Georgians seem to be treating the South-Ossetian issue as not too urgent, as soon as there is no active visible support for secessionists from neighboring North Ossetia, or from Russia.

### **AN EYE ON THE WEST, A FOOT IN THE EAST**

Most Georgians still seem to be in expectation of Godot to intervene to solve their problems rather than consolidate and organize and act constructively. Powerful yet uninterested mediator (obviously, not Russia) that would impose a successful finalization to the hard positional bargaining is something people have in mind when asked about what should be done about the conflicts. When asked which group or organization or country could realistically play such a role, they are at a loss... Discouraged by the OSCE, and especially UN efforts to help solve the conflicts, the Georgian society failed to activate its potential to the end of effectivizing the negotiations. Apparently, this is the issue where no shrewd president can replace or substitute what is expected from the public. Creative and competitive spirit, although an individualist-styled, has always been prevailing in Georgians, yet the belief in efficiency of a collective constructive action has always been frail.

Unlike most other Caucasus nations, among which traditionalist, strictly hierarchical and structurally united North-Caucasian ethnicities are particularly notable, Georgia has never been a clan-based society. Ethnologically Georgians significantly differ from region to region within Georgia. Family ties, including closest relatives, are the strongest among group-forming factors, followed by peer connections, friendship, especially male friendship (“dzmakatsoba”), and functional ties, with ethnic and social distinctions being observed. Family names indicating a noble descent are more likely to produce leaders or to open doors. On the whole, Georgians form a loosely structured, self-centric yet curious, West-respecting, Russia-appre-

hending community, explicitly Europe-oriented, implicitly Asia-affected at the same time.

Most citizens still hardly realize they have rights to enjoy, or imagine a rational and feasible way to protect them. Realizing the state should protect borders and territorial integrity of the country, and even enforce safety rules on the roads, they would hardly believe the same state should protect and ensure every single citizen's dignity or impose penalty on slander. There has been a lot of debate in Georgia about the abolishment of death penalty. Most ordinary citizens just wonder what this debate is all about, when the legal systems, and especially penitentiaries, are inefficient, and require a profound reform. Death penalty has lately been under moratorium, and may soon be completely abolished to conform to the World Bank designated standards and accelerate Georgia's incorporation in European structures, but many ordinary citizens just know they would feel even more unprotected in an artificially ripened democracy. What they firmly believe is that who is richer will always buy his way out of law and order. Insecurity felt by an ordinary citizen facing a power structure cannot be helped by any experiments whatsoever.

### **FROM GRAND FAILURES TO GREAT EXPECTATIONS?**

The major internal threat to the security of Georgia comes from the ethno-territorial conflicts, primarily the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict. In the continuous discussion of various models of administrative/territorial structure, this clause had to be left open in the country's Constitution "until the resolution of disputes and reaffirmation of the territorial integrity of Georgia".

Looking back, we see that serious social tension was forecast for Georgia in recent years which, however, never materialized. The great majority of people still have to survive on a few lari (1 US Dollar equals 1.28 Lari) per month, looking for odd jobs and selling valuables from home, sometimes the home itself. Surprisingly for a foreign eye, they do not rally or strike in protest. Cinics say

the Abkhazian conflict and the presence of compactly settled tens of thousands of refugees played the role of a safety valve. Three major factors have, in fact, served as regulators of the process: (a) traditional resentment for publicly demonstrating one's economic hardships, (b) tradition of inter-generation family ties and mutual support, and (c) a foreign humanitarian assistance for the poorest groups. Harder-working young people have much more chances to survive, although with no stable prospect. Proficiency in English, computer and management skills are highly instrumental in placing young people with higher-paying banking and trading businesses, and with the offices of already gradually shrinking foreign humanitarian structures.

Another major pacifying factor has been the great expectations from transportation of the Caspian crude oil to Europe via Georgia, which include economic, as well as political aspects.

### **THE OILY SIDE OF THE CAUCASUS SANDWICH**

Georgia and the whole Caucasus region may be in the beginning of discovering another Murphy's Law. The international business has serious incentives to support the peace-making efforts in the Caucasus (as well as independence of South-Caucasian nations). Termination of war in, and Russia's agreeable tone toward Chechnia have been imposed by vital necessity to stabilize the region in order to make Western investments possible. The same is expected to work with regard to unsolved conflicts in Georgia, of which Abkhazia is in close vicinity to the oil pipeline route. Georgia has already demonstrated the ability to maintain safety of investments, in spite of unsolved problems, but a prospect of guerilla war or terrorist acts next to the pipeline or the terminal in Supsa can still undermine the country credibility as a partner.

Even under peaceful skies, placing too much expectation with the benefits from the Caspian oil transportation may be a dangerous strategy. Says Dr. Johan Galtung, "Newly independent Georgia and Azerbaijan may have been better off without oil entirely: disad-



vantages from being caught between the interests of great powers competing for oil deposits, their extraction and transit control in the region may be a painful awakening from the present idyllic pictures". It is true that grass suffers from whatever activities of elephants, be it fighting or lovemaking. However, the grass needs fertilization to grow at all. Shall the sandwich fall with its oiled side down before Georgians are able to taste it? Let us see what the oil issue boils down to at the moment.

First of all, are the reserves really so substantial as to compete with the existing world suppliers? According to the Baku-based Dutch journalist and writer Charles van der Lieeuw, if the Caspian countries will have to work hard and to invest fortunes to double their output in ten years, the OPEC could do it overnight just by opening a few more taps. The present reserves of oil in the world are estimated crudely at about a trillion barrels, of which, according to some estimations, the states bordering the Caspian Sea together may count for 2/3 of them (which would make a beastly amount of 666 billion barrels: the information called misleading by the mentioned expert). The total amount of Caspian known reserves is 3.5 billion tons of crude oil and over 600 billion cubic meters of gas. The cost-price of Caspian oil has been calculated at an average of \$7 a barrel, while in the huge West-Siberian fields extraction costs over \$12 a barrel.

The main options today for the export of oil and gas outside Russia are from Baku to the new terminal of Supsa on the Georgian Black Sea coast through Georgia and Turkey to the southern Anatolian coast. The least costly seems to be a further extension of the Baku-Supsa line to provide the terminal at Supsa with up to four million barrels a day. Such a vast quantity of supply would lower the bottom price of one barrel of oil in Supsa to an average of \$7 for Transcaspian oil and between \$5 and \$6 for offshore Caspian oil.

Two pipeline routes have been finally agreed on: from Baku via Chechnya (alternate via "more stable" Daghestan) to the terminal in the greatest Russian seaport of Novorossyisk (requires an investment of around \$2 billion), and from Baku to the terminal in Supsa

(the financial output being expected at around \$1.3 billion). The third option was via Javakheti region of Southern Georgia to the terminal in the South-East Anatolian Mediterranean (an investment of no less than \$3.2 billion would be needed).

Needless to say, Russia would be happy to be a sole partner for the West in exploiting the Caspian oil issue, rather than sharing this role with the Transcaucasian states. Rationally speaking, the final decision has been made to everybody's benefit. Restoration of railway through Abkhazia would further enhance the economic potential of the region. That no progress is made in Georgian-Abkhazian negotiations, is interpreted by many as Russia's unwillingness to further enhance Georgia's potential and credibility by helping reach a solution for this disputed Black Sea region.

Feasibility of practically all economic development plans in Georgia depends on whether the potential of stability and growth substantially exceeds the potential of destruction and dissolution through externally manipulable ethnic/territorial disputes.

### **GEORGIA AND THE NATO EXPANSION ISSUE**

There is a rising understanding in Georgia that NATO, as the world's most powerful and successful defence alliance, has accumulated enormous experience in the theoretical study, development and practical application of national security concepts and defence co-operation strategies for nations that have sorely needed them. Its Partnership for Peace Programme has already become an effective instrument for building peace and co-operation in the post-Communist world. Georgia, owing to its geopolitical location, can play a constructive role in confidence building, peacemaking, and defence co-operation throughout the entire region of the post-Soviet Caucasus. And it would be an unaffordable luxury for Georgia and other Caucasian nations to disregard NATO experience and its proposed assistance. The NATO Secretary General Javier Solana's visit in February 1997 to the post-Soviet states, including Georgia, once again displayed NATO's strong intention to develop co-operation with us

on a mutually advantageous basis, our share in this “bargain” being a stable co-operation in peacemaking efforts, irreversible movement towards democratic society and the rule of law.

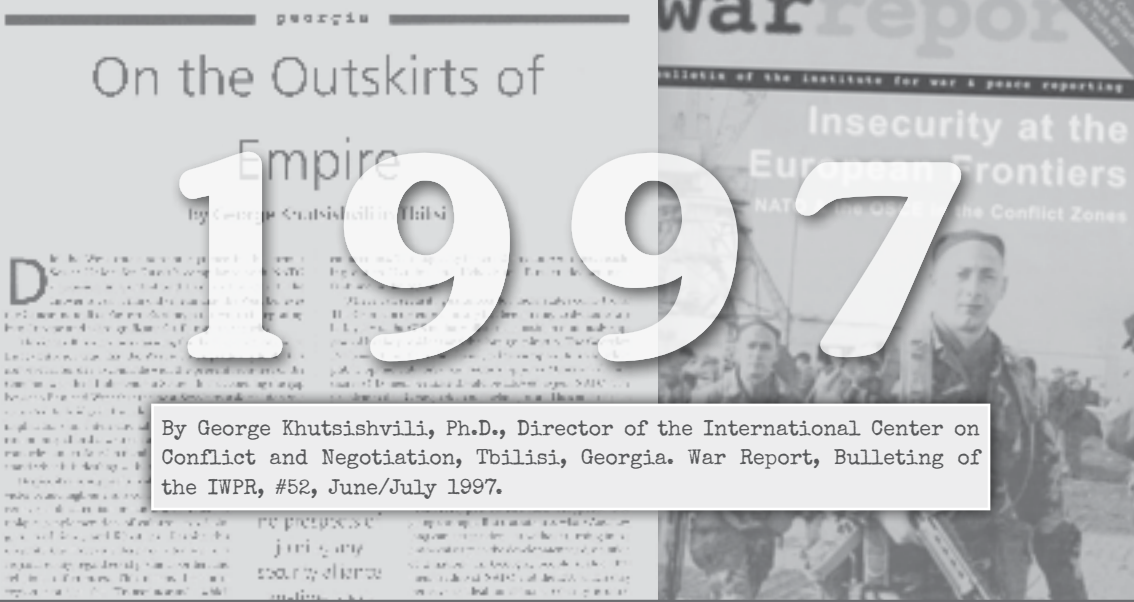
The NATO enlargement is perceived by general public in Georgia as a natural historical and geopolitical process, and a defensive measure of the West against Russia’s plans of reestablishing her dominance in Europe. There is little hope that Georgia may qualify to join the enlarged NATO or unified Europe in the nearest decade, but in the longer run Georgians do not give up hopes to become part of the process. Georgia actively participates in NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program, and is trying to enlarge the scope of relationships with the Alliance through a number of activities like joint seminars and trainings of academics, technicians and military, as well as parliamentarians and diplomats. The scarcity of those in Georgian diplomatic circles, who would question positive impact of the NATO enlargement on the grounds that it is really a complicating and disbalancing factor, is indicative.

In a regional security context, Russia is perceived in Georgia as a “clear and present danger”, an expansionist and dominating neighbor destined to intrude, and impossible to ignore. The West, unlike Russia, is perceived as a friendly yet uninterested big rich guy capable of risking some investment “just for the hell of it”, but capable also of withdrawing later from the region entirely. Creating a forpost against the “Big Bear” did not prove to be a sufficient stimulus for establishing a long-term counter-balancing Western presence in the region. General public understanding in Georgia is that the enlarging (and thus advancing to the Caucasus borders) NATO may in itself play a role of a shield against the plans of re-integration of the region under Russian dominance if supported by a synergizing process of the Caucasus regional defence and strategic co-operation. A few people argue though it would do exactly the opposite, i.e. stimulate Russia to enforce its domination plans, like it was feared to materialize after the Helsinki summit in spring 1997, and again after the Final Act between Russia and NATO was signed May 27. Realistic though it may sound, the matter is to have enough

courage to appreciate a mainstream process, although it may also infer some disadvantages or security risks. Growing partnership of the Caucasus countries with NATO and with each other through regional security networks can create for them a necessary security guarantee.

A greater-scale event in Georgia, demonstrating the unanimous attitude towards co-operation with NATO among officials, academia, mass media and general public, proved to be the joint NATO-ICCN workshop “Developing a Regional Security Concept for the Caucasus” held in October 1996 in Tbilisi. Fifteen countries, seventeen international organizations, lots of NGOs and GOs sent their representatives to the forum. Incorporated in the workshop was the seminar “Integration and Disintegration in the Former Soviet Union: Implications for the Regional and Global Security”, jointly organized by the Program on Global Security of Brown University and the ICCN. Scenarios of post-Soviet development generated lively discussions among the participants.

Experts agree in that the workshop and the seminar marked the start of an age of genuine and growing public interest in Georgia towards the opportunities opening as a result of the co-operation with NATO. The workshop made also clear that national security concepts for the Caucasus countries cannot be successfully developed without considering them within a regional security context. Despite all existing disputes, South-Caucasus nations sorely need to co-operate in jointly building their common security, which should also facilitate solution to painful problems such as Nagorno Karabakh. The unanimous understanding of all participants was that the Abkhazia problem should and can be solved by peaceful means. Notably, the issue of the Russian attitude towards the NATO enlargement was touched upon very tactfully.



## ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF EMPIRE

Did the West trade non-interference in the former Soviet Union for Russia's compliance with NATO expansion in Central and Eastern Europe? If the answer is yes, it can only mean that the West believes the Caucasus, unlike Eastern Europe, is not worth integrating into Europe and is insignificant for European security.

This in itself is a serious warning for the Caucasian nations. But can it also mean that the West intends gradually to shift its conceptual border to coincide with the present frontiers of the Commonwealth of Independent States, thus deepening the gap between East and West that the post-Soviet transformation was expected to bridge? If so, does the West grasp the long-term implications for international security? Can the international community afford a western-assisted reintegration of the CIS countries under Russian dominance? And does the West understand what it is dealing with in the Caucasus?

Despite its already partly realised potential for violence and high-intensity conflict, the Caucasus receives little attention or study. It represents a unique conglomeration of cultures, psycholo-

gies, traditions, and life-styles. Despite this diversity the Caucasus deserves attention as a regional entity, regardless of political borders and religious differences. This means the entire region, not just the “Transcaucasus” — which refers only to the area south of the Great Caucasian Range, and reflects a Russian perspective — but including the “Russian” Northern Caucasus.

**The Regional Framework.** In addressing their national security, the Caucasian nations, apprehensive of any regional integration schemes, have verbally approved but in practice ignored as unfeasible any all-Caucasian initiatives. The Armenian-Azeri dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh remains a major faultline in the region. Yet the realisation is slowly dawning that national security concepts cannot develop without consideration of a broader context of regional security.

Since the fall of the Soviet empire, Russia has tried to show the world that the Caucasian nations cannot sustain themselves and develop peacefully, and therefore need a strong supervisor. Of the Transcaucasian states, land-locked and resourceless Armenia has tied its interests much more closely with Russia than Georgia and Azerbaijan have. Georgia is at odds with Russia because of the unsolved ethnoterritorial disputes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where Russian mediation has failed, while Azerbaijan is promoting its oil-based Western connections. This logically fosters Georgian-Azeri ties, reaching out to Ukraine and Uzbekistan, further deepening a fault line in the region.

Where can security guarantees for these states come from? The Georgian defence ministry has been trying to demonstrate its loyalty to the CIS military alliance, a position cautiously supported by the president and the foreign ministry. The Georgian Parliament, on the other hand, takes an opposite view, while public opinion almost unanimously opposes Moscow’s dictum that no CIS member state should be allowed to join NATO. The problem is that Georgia does not belong to, and has no prospect of joining, any strong defence alliance in the immediate future. The only prospect beyond the dilemma of unsecured limbo versus Moscow-generated integration

lies in temporary and unstable defence alliances of groups of CIS countries, such as the Ukraine-Georgia-Azerbaijan axis.

The problems facing the Caucasus have been attributed to the so-called transition period which every post-Soviet nation is supposed to be going through. But transition to what? And how long can a transition last without turning into a historical stage in the development or dissolution of a nation? In Georgia, people realise that membership of NATO and the EU, which they perceive as ideal for national security, is unrealistic. But so is the idea of re-Russification, because Russia has nothing to offer that is worth the pains of integration under Russian dominance. A military presence and some control over economic relations with the West are the most that Russia can expect to achieve in the region. That is, as long as no new conflicts emerge, and no hitherto latent ones ignite.

**The Georgian Miracle.** Georgia has changed visibly since the demise of the Soviet Union. Miraculous as it may seem, the country is slowly recovering. Opposition politicians are not persecuted for openly expressing themselves in strong language in writing, orally, or on the broadcast media. In contrast with most other post-Soviet states, no censorship exists for communication or correspondence with the West. Life is fairly quiet and safe in most of the country, and there are no visible signs of social tension, although there are shortages and pay is very low and erratic.

Much of this miracle must be credited to one person — President Eduard Shevardnadze — and to the massive humanitarian assistance and western loans induced by his name. Expectations of the Caspian oil pipeline have also helped. So, too, did the impact of the Chechen war, which dismantled the formidable image of Russia and its army and raised concerns about the safety of investments in the Caucasian part of Russia, thus helping Georgia promote an alternative route for Caspian oil.

Success was the result of the Western effort to prevent a Russian-dominated reintegration working together with the Georgian leader's determination to bring his country out of crisis. When the

Georgian-Abkhaz war began in 1992, the country was torn apart by the rampaging paramilitary troops of the warlords Tengiz Kitovani and Jaba Ioseliani, and the western regions were still dominated by supporters of the former president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Since then, Shevardnadze has masterfully exploited his rivals' mistakes and failures, including an August 1995 assassination attempt, to consolidate his position and avert the growing threat of organised crime. After this, people started to believe law and order was feasible in Georgia.

Today, Shevardnadze is trying to upgrade his country's image to European compatibility standards. But is it possible to base a country's image on the image of its leader? The president's energetic efforts have brought international recognition to his country. Even after the conflict in Abkhazia grew into a war, and the Russian-aided Abkhaz proclaimed independence, the international community never questioned Georgia's territorial integrity. However, the problems of breakaway Abkhazia and of the many people displaced by the war remain to be solved.

The average Georgian expects Georgian state jurisdiction to be restored in Abkhazia, but very few people realise how complex the Abkhazian problem is. Georgian-Abkhazian negotiation is still at a stalemate. The reason for this, in the popular view, is Russia's unwillingness to press the Abkhaz leadership to compromise. This could lead to armed clashes, with catastrophic consequences, once the UN-sponsored mandate of the CIS (actually, Russian) peace-keeping forces expires on July 31, 1997. The Georgian Parliament has already demanded withdrawal of these forces, and if this happens, fighting may be renewed. But are the parties to the conflict really incapable of making any progress in negotiation themselves?

In this sense, Georgians still seem to be waiting for Godot to intervene to solve their problems, rather than consolidating, organising and acting constructively. The vision of those in authority is limited to wanting a powerful yet disinterested mediator (obviously, not Russia) to impose a deal. When asked which group, organisation or country could realistically play such a role, they are at a loss.



Discouraged by the OSCE, and especially by UN efforts to help solve the conflicts, Georgian society has failed to make a constructive contribution to improving the efficacy of international action. Here, no president, however shrewd, can substitute for public initiative. A creative and competitive spirit, albeit individualistic, has always abounded in Georgia, but belief in efficiency of a collective constructive action has always been frail.

Most people in Georgia have limited awareness of their rights, and see rational and feasible ways to protect them. Expectations of the state are limited. It should protect the country's territorial integrity and maybe enforce road safety rules. Most people firmly believe that the rich will always be able to buy their way out of law and order, and that nothing can be done about that.

Without significant western assistance for economic and social transformation and moral reassurance, Georgia and the Caucasus as a whole are likely to remain the petty provincial outskirts of a fallen empire, conflict-prone and vulnerable to manipulation from outside, with an unpredictable impact on the CIS and even European security.

This volume contains complete  
of all papers presented at a joint  
International Relations/Friedrich Ebert S  
On "The OSCE in the CIS," held in July  
in Georgia. The papers examine the OSCE  
management, resolution, and prevention  
pendent states of the former Soviet  
includes analyses written by Canadian

## BALANCING HEGEMONY

*The OSCE in the CIS*

# 1997

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Published in the Book "Balancing Hegemony: The OSCE in the CIS", 1997.

Queen's University, focusing on international security and

## THE OSCE AND CONFLICT IN GEORGIA

### INTRODUCTION

Georgia is slowly recovering from a severe economic, political, ethnic and social crisis that has existed from the moment of its independence. A degree of optimism has returned. After the successful parliamentary and presidential elections of November 1995, people's expectations of improvement in social and economic conditions have grown. However, all recognize that it is only with the resolution of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that real revival can begin.

A number of international organizations have been involved in efforts to assist Georgians in finding solutions to these conflicts. The OSCE and the UN were the first to establish missions in the country in 1992. At present, the OSCE Mission to Georgia has representatives from 14 countries. On 23 May 1996, the mandate of the mission was extended by the Permanent Council of the OSCE until 31 March 1997. The current head of the mission is a German diplomat, Ambassador Michael Libal. The OSCE has focused on po-

litical and legal development in the country as a whole, and, in the realm of conflict prevention, has taken responsibility for mediation of the conflict in South Ossetia. In addition to preoccupying itself with national reconstruction, the principal UN focus has been the conflict in Abkhazia, which began in 1992. The results of these efforts thus far have been rather small. This reflects the extreme complexity of the issues involved, as well as the fragmented and frustrated state of the society in which the conflict has occurred. In this paper I examine the historical and altitudinal context of the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and then turn to a description and assessment of the OSCE's role therein.

### **THE CONTEXT OF THE CONFLICTS**

As a result of the civil war and two internal conflicts, almost 250,000 IDPs are still living in temporary accommodation away from their homes. Many are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and are discouraged by their vanishing prospects of returning home. Their vulnerability is aggravated by the general social and economic hardships existing in Georgia.

As a result of Russian colonization and seven decades of Soviet rule, Georgia does not have a tradition nor the experience of self-sustaining economic development. Privatization has proceeded slowly since independence and is viewed with little enthusiasm by the population. The ongoing energy crisis, enforced currency and structural reforms, and rapid rises in prices and fees for services have further aggravated the social situation of vulnerable groups – among them the IDPs, pensioners, teachers, and their dependents. Their standard of living remains extremely low. Masses of disoriented people have become involved in crime and are abusing alcohol and other drugs. Underlying this is the belief that the conflicts can never be resolved peacefully.

The Georgian mass media have not played a constructive role in overcoming post-conflict crises. Instead of pragmatically approaching the problem and thereby preparing the people for reconcilia-

tion, tolerance and non-violent interaction with their recent foes, the media have been doing the opposite, endlessly revisiting issues of rape, ethnic cleansing, torture, murder, and disappearance perpetrated by the insurgent minorities. They reinforce traumatic moments and insults to national pride. Among the most dangerous indicators of the mental state of broad sections of the population are the sympathy and support many people show for militaristic and victimizing media programs, their hostility towards peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts on the part of the Georgian government and international organizations, and the broad and strong belief that Georgia's problems can only be resolved by force.

1997

Very few believe in the possibility of conflict resolution through negotiation. Federalist solutions are seen as ways to dissolve the country. Democratic governance is perceived to be a costly liberal luxury that only big and rich countries can afford. Nostalgia for a strong hand is still strong, particularly amongst those of the older generation. The psychological and mental state of communities on both sides prevents them from perceiving adequately the sources and current status of the conflicts and the options available for mitigating them. This suggests that political efforts at conflict resolution must be accompanied by attempts to deal with these psychological conditions.

### **GEORGIA'S CONFLICT**

Although international attention has focused on the conflict in Abkhazia, one cannot study the two conflicts in isolation from each other. Their comparison reveals many features that facilitate greater understanding and movement towards their constructive transformation. To get a complete view, both state and community problems must be addressed from both internal (*ex parte interna*) and external (*ex parte externa*) perspectives. In particular, study of the conflicts has thus far placed insufficient emphasis on community security within the regions that have broken away. This approach also facilitates an understanding of the Russian dimension of these

and other ethnopolitical conflicts in the former USSR. With regard to the latter, some ethnic minorities in the NIS have seen Russia as an actor that might give them better social guarantees, more stable development, and surprisingly, greater tolerance than they might expect from titular ethnic groups in their NIS. One factor explaining pro-Russian trends in minority community opinion is obviously an economic one. The connection with Russia ostensibly promised higher wages, pensions, etc. This attitude, along with the need to find an “ecological niche” within a big power, was clearly present both in South Ossetia and Abkhazia until the Chechen war shook the minorities’ belief in their secured future in the Russian Federation.

The most obvious difference between the Osset and Abkhaz situations lies in the prospects for resolution. One is in legal deadlock, complicated by considerable intolerance and potential for the renewal of armed clashes; in the other case, fatigue has brought a degree of ripeness for conciliation. Settlement of the Abkhaz question is hindered mainly by the uncompromising position of the Abkhaz secessionist leadership. In the case of South Ossetia, the principal obstacle seems to be the fear amongst ethnic Georgians regarding the possible implications of a restoration of the region’s autonomy.

A second major difference lies in the extent of displacement. In spite of insecurity, most of the Georgian population of South Ossetia have stayed in their villages. In contrast, almost the entire Georgian population of Abkhazia was forced to flee. A third is that a considerable part of the community in Tskhinvali (the capital of South Ossetia) is ready to accept Georgian jurisdiction. Many are willing to speak the Georgian language; and trade and other human contacts are growing. There are no visible trends in this direction in Abkhazia. Finally, in geographical terms, South Ossetia, unlike Abkhazia, is landlocked and less strategically located. The Ossets expect much lower levels of external support than do the Abkhaz.

Many experts believe the Osset conflict to be the closer of the two to resolution. Since the 1992 Dagomys Accord establishing a ceasefire, the most important step in negotiations has been the OSCE-mediated Memorandum on CSBMs concluded in May 1996.

However, the memorandum was not what the Georgian population expected; it avoided the most painful aspects of the conflict. There was no indication as to when, where, and how a political solution to the conflict would be finalized. The gap was so obvious that Georgian television rushed to fill it by noting that “the Osset side has agreed in the memorandum to accept Georgian jurisdiction over the former South Ossetia region”<sup>1</sup>.

Georgian expectations were clearly excessive. The memorandum is undoubtedly a step forward. It includes important undertakings, including the non-resort to force, demilitarization of the conflict zone, amnesty for those not implicated in war crimes or other criminal acts, a commitment to resolve the refugee problem, and so on. However, it could not have gone much further at this stage, and the memorandum itself can only come into effect if it is followed by practical measures to implement it as well as more substantial negotiations on a resolution of political aspects of the conflict.

Curiously, the most significant impediment to resolution of the conflict is a toponymic question. What should the region be called in the treaty ending the conflict and thereafter? Ossets demand that the region’s old designation be restored and accepted by the Georgian state; the predominant sentiment in the Georgian community is that such a settlement would be contrary to historical truth and would be an invitation for the Ossets to attempt to secede at some later date. The other significant obstacle is that the Ossets seek to be upgraded from their previous regional status to that of autonomous republic, and that the Ossets themselves do not agree on what level of practical autonomy would be acceptable (e.g., whether Georgian law enforcement officials could operate within its borders).

1997

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<sup>1</sup> “Matsne”, Georgian TV Program, 16 May 1996.

## ATTITUDINAL DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Resolution of Georgia's two civil wars is severely complicated by the attitudinal legacy of conflict. Abkhaz and Osset perspectives on their respective positions in Georgia have much in common. Both minorities have enjoyed certain rights and privileges of autonomy. They both deeply distrust the central authorities of Georgia and Georgians in general. Both grew used to Russia serving as a protective shield or as a balancer against Georgian claims. As instability in the Soviet Union grew, both came to the conclusion that in order to protect themselves they needed a level of autonomy one level higher than that which they had possessed under Soviet power.

My own research on majority and minority opinion from 1990-95 suggest that the two conflicts are surrounded by clusters of attitudes that serve a profound impediment to settlement. The conflicting parties' assessment of their own security and of the "other" can be analysed in terms of statements regarding the current status of interethnic relations, attributes of national identity, human rights, levels of fear and distrust, and perspectives on prospects for stability and territorial integrity of the state. Examination of these categories illuminates the depth of the conflicts, as well as the dimensions of disagreement among the parties.

The general opinion in South Ossetia is that Georgians cannot be trusted since they supported the extremist Gamsakhurdia government that unleashed war against South Ossetia and condoned repressive acts against Ossets elsewhere in Georgia. Georgians resist the restoration of the name "South Ossetia" to the region because of their hegemonic attitude towards the Ossets and their unwillingness to accept real autonomous status for the region. No matter what political solution to the conflict is found, human rights and freedoms will never be fully guaranteed to the Ossets. No constitution or body of law could provide such a guarantee. Violence between the communities is inevitable, not least because of the desire for revenge. Georgia will always remain a weak and unstable state, vulnerable to ethnic micro-nationalism and subject to inter-

nal conflict and external manipulation. Consequently, South Ossetia should insist upon the maximum amount of autonomous status possible, preferably with Russian or other international guarantees.

Their Georgian counterparts living in the region have fundamentally different perspectives. In their view, the Ossets cannot be trusted, as North Ossetia borders their region; they will always have separatist aspirations and they will always seek union with North Ossetia. South Ossetia as a political jurisdiction was an artificial creation of the Bolsheviks. The Ossets insist on the restoration of the region's autonomy in order to facilitate eventual secession. The hostility to remaining in Georgia is evident in their deliberate destruction of Georgian historical and cultural sites in the region. In these conditions, the human and civil rights of ethnic Georgians in the region cannot be guaranteed without the restoration of full Georgian jurisdiction. If the Ossets manage to restore their autonomy, they will commit acts of violence against resident and returning Georgians and suppress their rights. Their views on the future of Georgia, by contrast, resemble those of their Osset counterparts. Georgia will never be self-sustainable within its current borders and will be permanently vulnerable to secessionism from within and great power manipulation from outside. As such, Ossets and other ethnic minorities should not be given formal autonomy and Georgia should avoid any federal solution.

Turning to the population of Abkhazia, the Abkhaz, like the Ossets, take the view that Georgians cannot be trusted; they have never accepted the distinct territorial identity of Abkhazia. They have attempted to assimilate the Abkhaz population and extinguish its culture. The Georgians have evinced imperial attitudes, broken agreements, and instigated war against Abkhazia to prevent a federal solution that would have ensured the autonomous status of the region. In the meantime, Georgians have attempted to eradicate evidence of Abkhaz history, culture, and statehood. In fact, they go to the extent of claiming that Abkhazia has always been only another name for Western Georgia. The rights of the Abkhaz cannot be assured within the context of the Georgian state because it is crim-



inalized and corrupt. As soon as the border between Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia is reopened and large numbers of IDPs return, there will be violent acts of revenge. In the meantime, Georgia will remain a weak and unstable state, subject to internal conflict and external manipulation, vulnerable to ethnic nationalism and unable to ensure equality of rights in society. For these reasons, Abkhazia should seek independence from, or at least protected confederal status within Georgia.

As for Georgian perspectives on the Abkhaz, the Abkhaz are not to be trusted. Despite centuries-old common historical and cultural roots — and the long-standing Georgian tradition of tolerance embodied in the considerable privileges enjoyed by the Abkhaz in the Soviet era and in the post-independence Georgian recognition that the Abkhaz are an indigenous ethnic group — the Abkhaz ungratefully chose secession and have fostered intolerance and hatred toward Georgians. The Abkhaz refuse to recognize that their region of Western Georgia never existed as a separate state and was always part of Georgia. There is no historical justification for the Abkhaz effort to create a state on the basis of genocide and ethnic cleansing. There is no possibility to guarantee the civil and human rights of Georgians returning to Abkhazia, since the Abkhaz authorities will remain hostile to them. The Abkhaz population hates the Georgians. They will take revenge on returning Georgians. This means that returning Georgians must be protected by Georgian law and Georgian law enforcement officials in Abkhazia. Given the continuing internal and external vulnerability of Georgia, Abkhazia should be given no more than minimal political autonomy, if the separatists refuse to accept Georgian jurisdiction in Abkhazia, then it is within Georgia's legal rights to restore sovereignty by force.

Comparing and contrasting these perspectives, we can clearly see some common characteristics, such as mutual distrust, mutual fear (though much greater on the side of the minorities), the prevalence of unsubstantiated generalizations, extrapolations, and judgments on all sides, and gross exaggeration of the positions of the adversary. Remarkably, all parties agree in their pessimistic as-

assessment of the Georgian state. This drives their insistence on protective measures for their own communities. Although one should not underestimate the significance of these attitudinal constraints on political settlement, the essential similarity of the psychology of all the parties may give some hope that efforts aimed at mitigating the crises – mediated by a third party respected by both sides – may be successful.

One potentially promising vehicle for settlement is the federal option. This has evoked considerable discussion in parliament and the government, in the media and at the community level. However, Georgian society has not been prepared for federalist and multicultural solutions to the problem of squaring cultural diversity with territorial integrity. Many see federalism as a recipe for disintegration through the legalization and encouragement of minority claims for autonomy. Given the nature of the fears of the Georgian majority, a unitary model appears to them as a solution to the problem of state consolidation.

1997

### **THE ROLE OF THE OSCE IN GEORGIA**

It is against this background that the OSCE must conduct its activities in Georgia. As already mentioned, the OSCE sent a mission of long duration to Georgia in 1992. The mandate includes the following:

- To assist in negotiations between the parties of Georgia's conflicts, aimed at achieving peaceful resolution of the Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts by political means;
- To monitor, with their consent, the Joint Peacekeeping Force which was established in Tskhinvali according to the Sochi Agreement of 24 June 1992;
- To foster cooperation between the parties;
- To encourage respect for human rights;

- To assist the creation of democratic institutions in the country, and
- To support the principle of a free press and to monitor its implementation.

As far as the Georgian-Ossetian conflict is concerned, the mission mandate lays down the following:

- To assist in the creation of a wider political consensus, within which a firm political resolution of the conflict can be achieved on the basis of the principles and declarations of the OSCE;
- To initiate dialogue between all sides to the conflict by means of “Round Table” meetings, with the aim of demonstrating and trying to remove sources of tension and providing political reconciliation across the zone of conflict;
- To monitor the joint peacekeeping force, establishing and supporting contact with the military command of these forces, collecting information on the military situation, reporting breaches of the existing ceasefire and highlighting the political consequences of these or any other military actions for the commanders on the ground;
- To play an active role in the work of the Joint Control Commission in working out specific proposals for resolving the conflict; and
- To establish contacts with the local authorities and representatives of the population and to demonstrate a visible presence of the OSCE throughout the area.

In relation to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, the mandate of the mission makes provision for regular liaison the UN while carefully following unfolding events mid reporting on them regularly to the OSCE. This allows the CiO to participate in the negotiations held under the aegis of the UN. However, unlike in South Ossetia, the mission does not monitor the peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia nor observance of the ceasefire agreement.

In March 1994, the mandate was broadened to include a number of Georgia-wide activities, such as:

- To encourage respect for human rights and basic freedoms;
- To assist in developing juridical and democratic institutions and processes, including consultations in drafting the new constitution, the introduction of legislation on citizenship and the creation of independent judicial organs, and to monitor the conduct of elections, and
- To coordinate these activities with the OSCE HCNM and the ODIHR, to cooperate with the EU and other organizations working in this field in Georgia.

The mission conducts its activities all over Georgia. The headquarters is located in Tbilisi, and, as reflected in its mandate, measures are also at hand to open an office in Tskhinvali. Apart from cooperation with the UN, the mission also regularly exchanges information and operates in conjunction with other international organizations. It submits reports of its activities and the situation in the region to the OSCE in Vienna. It has established a productive working relationship with all sides, in particular in Tbilisi, Gori, Tskhinvali, and Sukhumi with regard to South Ossetia, the principal activity of the mission has been the monitoring of the ceasefire. The mission performs its monitoring activity in South Ossetia three times a week. Overall, the situation in the monitored areas is relatively stable, although criminal activity – such as murders, robberies, and vehicle theft – continues. The Russian posts are generally well operated and in good order. The Georgian posts lack some equipment. The Ossetian posts show different levels of professionalism. Some continue to refuse to allow the inspection of weapons storage areas. The Ossetians have problems with lack of pay, uniforms, and some equipment. The prime objective of the mission is to keep the military side of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict under reliable control. OSCE monitors also play an active role in helping to settle civil quarrels among populations in mixed settlement areas stem-

ming from delimitation of farmland, use of water resources, and the spread of criminality.

Beyond this, the mission has been deeply involved in the mediation of a political settlement and in preventing any renewal of conflict. The current settlement process has been taking place on two distinct tracks – the formal mechanism of the existing JCC and the negotiation process on security, economic, and status matters.

The mission worked as an intermediary in building a consensus between the Georgians and Ossetians on the text of the Memorandum on SCBMs, which was signed in Moscow on 16 May 1996. This was the first important political step that could pave the way for broader economic and cultural cooperation and ultimately lead to a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict.

Since the agreement on the SCBM memorandum, the mission has engaged in numerous related efforts to assure the continuation of contacts on different levels, including the arrangement of a meeting between the president of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, and chairman of the Supreme Soviet of South Ossetia, Ludvig Chibirov, on 27 August 1996 in Vladikavkaz. The mission has also sought to develop interparliamentary contacts, and to organize a meeting of Georgian and South Ossetian parliamentarians. In order to overcome the information blockade, the mission initiated and organized a roundtable of Georgian and South Ossetian journalists in Tskhinvali on 14 May 1996. At present the mission is actively involved in the follow-up work, including arrangement of the interviews of President Shevardnadze by South Ossetian TV and Chairman Chibirov by Georgian TV, the preparation of the second journalists' roundtable in Tbilisi, etc.

The mission is also active in the economic field. It has facilitated contacts between groups of economic experts from both sides of the conflict in South Ossetia in order to start an economic recovery in the conflict zone and established a joint working group to carry this process forward. Following the working group's first meeting in Tskhinvali in September 1995, the mission invited the international

community of donor and financing institutions to join the initiative. To this effect, the mission organized a number of information meetings and fact-finding tours to Gori and Tskhinvali for representatives of Tbilisi-based embassies and donor organizations. As a result of these efforts a few experts, sponsored by participants in the tours, will start work in the near future on an economic assessment with a view to identifying specific projects. In part as a result of OSCE efforts, the possibility of financing joint Georgian-Ossetian projects has recently been included in the plans of the United Nations Development Program assistance program to Georgia.

1997

The other major field in which the OSCE is playing a role of assistance is in working out the legal and constitutional framework in which a comprehensive political solution can be enshrined. In August 1994, a proposal was circulated by the mission to the parties outlining a framework for a constitution. The paper was not welcomed by either side, since it ignored a number of serious questions, while raising others which the parties had not really thought through.<sup>1</sup>

Assessments of the OSCE's role in Georgia vary a great deal. One non-governmental organization active in conflict resolution in Georgia evaluates it as follows. On the one hand, both parties to the conflict try to downplay the role of the OSCE – yet both parties clearly derive benefits from it. For the Georgians, the OSCP has provided international supervision of the Russian “peacekeeping” role at a time when Georgia was weak and very much at the mercy of Russia. Since 1992, however, the importance of the OSCE for Georgia, at least in the content of the dispute with South Ossetia, has increased.

This is due in part to the fact that the OSCE mission expanded to include wider terms of reference, of which South Ossetia is now only one part. However, Georgians still see the OSCE as a balance to Russia's role as “peacemaker” and “peacekeeper”.

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Sammut and Nikola Cvetkovski, “Confidence Building Matters: The Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict”, London: VERTIC, March 1996, pp.16-17.

For the South Ossetians, the OSCE provides an important link with the international community. Although South Ossetian officials are perplexed by the rotating principle of the OSCE CiO and short terms of the members of the mission, and are annoyed by the mission's name (OSCE Mission to Georgia), they have generally been quite cooperative. A request that was made by the mission to open an office in Tskhinvali has, however, been refused.

The mission has been successful in its task of monitoring the peacekeeping forces. They have had less success in the promotion of contacts between the two sides and the development of confidence-building measures. In the Verification Technology Information Centre estimation, this is due partly to the cumbersome procedures of the OSCE and due partly to the fact that both the Georgians and the South Ossetians are very hesitant to be seen as making concessions, particularly within the rigid format of OSCE talks. Both sides feel that any commitments made in such a high-level international forum will be difficult to get out of. The process has therefore been slow and frustrating.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

Russian TV recently returned to the much discussed problem of Russia vs. "persons of Caucasian nationality" by referring to the research made in Russia and alleging that what creates the problem is a profound difference between the two mentalities. The Caucasus mentality is totally based on rituals, and any Caucasus community is an etiquette-based society, full of formalities of attitudes, behavior, and relationships. People are perceived and evaluated according to how they fit in that system, and they are accepted if they do so well, even if they display doubtful features according to general ethical rules. Russians, on the contrary, are seen in this research as a community that seek essential evaluation, and is non-appreciative of superficial, formal assessments (rather a self-centric than objective approach). Authors of the research rather display their own attitude towards Caucasians, trying to prove that they are mischievous, and/or superficial, and/or withdrawn. Along with some remarkable findings, some of these features described as typically Caucasian, are undoubtedly projections.

Political scientists seriously ponder how to reconcile the principle of self-determination of

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, 13 April 1998.

Post-Soviet Mentality in Transition

## “PERSONS OF CAUCASIAN NATIONALITY”

Russian TV recently returned to the much discussed problem of Russia vs “persons of Caucasian nationality” by referring to the research made in Russia and alleging that what creates the problem is a profound difference between the two mentalities. The Caucasus mentality is totally based on rituals, and any Caucasus community is an etiquette-based society, full of formalities of attitudes, behavior, and relationships. People are perceived and evaluated according to how they fit in that system, and they are accepted if they do it well, even if they display doubtful features according to general ethical rules.

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Political scientists seriously ponder how to reconcile the principle of self-determination of peoples with the inviolability of existing interstate borders.

### **POST-SOVIET MENTALITY IN TRANSITION**

In all the Soviet movies depicting Western lifestyle, one could easily recognize typical darker features of the life in the Soviet Union, which was a genuine Jungian projection of the shadow: isolated Soviet regime composed images of life and human relationships in the West exactly in accordance to its own complexes and subconscious self-image.

Scarce Soviet tourist groups to the West were strongly warned about secret services hunting for weaker Soviet citizens (especially professionals in technological fields, obviously less ideologically stable than workers or peasants) to sell their fatherland in a Faustian manner, and they were instructed to be prepared to resist all sorts of temptation. In full accordance with Merton's principle of self-fulfilling prophesy, things often really happened to the believers, while those who would not believe in the bullshit, usually completed their foreign trip without problems.

Back in their homes, people, presumably out of the scarcity of entertainment, liked to indulge in "high place" anecdotes (the insuperable character in most of them being Brezhnev). However, casts of characters of various spy stories which circulated in the stagnation period and involved high places, very rarely included a leader of the country. Trading the position and role of emperor for any reason whatsoever seemed absolutely senseless. Yet, even the most stable beliefs do not last forever. The most convincing tales are those which are hard to prove or disprove.

There has been animated discussion in the parliament and government, in the media and at the community level in Georgia on the possibility of federalist solution to the territorial integrity problem. The Georgian society proved generally unprepared for multiculturalist and federalist approaches to the problem: although there have

not been credible polls on the subject, most people see federalism as a way to disintegrate the country through legalization and encouragement of the minority claims for growing autonomization and, prospectively, secession. The underlying fears have been before long-term instability and weakness of the state structures, their inability to secure state borders and law enforcement in minority populated areas, to regulate inter-ethnic relations, and to provide a strong foreign policy. In view of the situation in conflict zones and given the same fears, a unitary model of state still looks for many like a consolidating solution, which shows how fragmented and inconsistent public consciousness in Georgia still is.

There is an evident difference between the Abkhazian and South-Ossetian problems: one represents a legal deadlock complicated by a considerable intolerance and possible renewal of the armed clashes, while the other conflict looks fatigued and ripe for conciliatory efforts. Solution to the Abkhazian problem is mainly hindered by a non-compromising position of the Abkhaz leadership, while a major obstacle to the solution of Ossetian question seems to be the fear among ethnic Georgians before restoration of the abolished autonomy.

The recently adopted Georgian Constitution avoids to finalize the question of administrative-territorial structure of the country “till the day its territorial integrity is restored”. President Shevardnadze had to take tougher tone when talking about the breakaway Abkhazia, and about the acceptable means of incorporating it back again into the Georgian state. January 19, 1996 an unanimous decision of the CIS leaders’ summit meeting in Moscow denounced “a destructive and non-compromizing position of the Abkhaz leadership”. A discouraging moment is that people grow frustrated as they fail to see a realistic way to constructive and peaceful solutions within observable period of time, and potential western investors in Georgian economy just grow tired to wait until the region finally quiets down.

## **“WE” AND “THEY”, OR HOW THE GEORGIANS DEFINE THEMSELVES**

Division of the universe into “us” and “them” is indispensable for a classic nation-state. Depending on the kind of mentality it stands for, it turns into an island-fortress or something else found out from these questions.

Who are “we”? Does “we” pertain to all who currently hold citizenship of Georgia, or belong to a wider community including diaspora, or includes only the Georgian citizens of Georgian ethnic descent, or only the ideologically righteous ones among the latter?

In Georgia it has always been ethnic origin that determined the identity of a person.

Why are we so small and how can we become greater?

“Smallness” in this case is something absolute and not subject to rationalization as the relativism revealed may damage the victimization-based advantages.

Why are we not in charge of our home?

A perennial question that should keep “us” alert until the great goal is achieved.

How shall we lock our doors from “them”?

The Abkhaz often ironically remark they have fought and died for such an immediate and personal value as their motherland, while the Georgians have been defending such an abstract and impersonal “value” as their territorial integrity (meaning that Abkhazia as such is not a value for Georgians but only a measure of their disability to keep the country together).

## THE PROBLEM OF INTELLIGENTSIA

(...to give Lenin’s definition (1919) as an epigraph) *“интеллигенция не мозг нации, а говно”*<sup>1</sup>.

One of the most painful problems of the post-conflict development in Georgia is the assessment of the role the national intelligentsia has been playing, and of the role it should play in preventing, de-escalating and constructively transforming the society’s attitudes with regard to the minority rights, ethnic relationships and democratic values. One of the main obstacles to the Georgian-Abkhaz conciliation process is the negative assessment the Abkhaz have made of the role played by Georgian intelligentsia in the conflict development. According to the Abkhaz, the Georgian educators and intellectuals, especially historians are largely responsible for developing the mentality that caused the war, intolerance and distrust between the two communities.

1998

## DYNOSAURS VERSUS MAMMALS

The nation’s future will be determined by how individual and minority rights and liberties, ethnic policies, the principles of civic society, and similar issues will be addressed, and the solution will be valued if it really reflects and not only proclaims the democratic choice by the great majority of people. The future will be determined by whether the main crisis, which inevitably is an inner crisis, will be addressed successfully, and this, in turn, will depend on the solution to the zero-sum dispute between the “old” and the “new” in the newly independent Georgia.

Two, a larger and a smaller, groups can be discerned in the post-Soviet Georgian society with regard to the whole complex of critical issues related to the national identity, national concept, democratic values and minority rights who can respectively be de-

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<sup>1</sup> “The Intelligentsia is not the brain of the nation, but its shit”. Lenin, 1919. Editor’s translation.

noted as “dinosaurs” and “mammals”. The “dinosaurs” are led by the educated and assertive people who, as a rule, were more or less well adjusted to the Soviet system, both on the scales of social position and the economic welfare, and have suffered considerable though not crucial losses from the collapse of the System and the subsequent post-Soviet transition. Now they are actively trying to adjust to the new realities, and to ensure their position in the emerging power/social structure. Not being too scrupulous about the ways these goals may be achieved, they smartly appeal to those feelings and perceptions in their community which reinforce as a rule, they feel a strong resentment towards democratic values and principles, which they usually try to conceal behind patriotic (=nationalistic) demagoguery.

The “mammals”, on the contrary, are those not too pampered by the Soviet system, although not necessarily openly confronted by it either, who felt alien to the System, or at least had moral problems about having to comply with written and unwritten rules of Soviet life. To their internal perception, their gains from the post-Soviet transition, although not always measurable in material terms, have been incomparably higher compared with losses. They not only realize the inevitability of democratic transition for the nation’s secure and sustainable future, but they identify with these developments.

The confrontation between “dinosaurs” and “mammals” is not very visible to an external eye because of an outwardly uniform positions on all critical issues expressed publicly and in the Georgian press, the fact that goes contrary to the wide-spread perception and belief that the Georgian press is outrageously open-minded. It should be stressed here that “intrinsic censorship” as a result of ambitions, fears and threat perceptions, opinions and views expressed in the family, in circles of friends, piers, office colleagues, are usually much more outspoken.

Incompatibility between the two communities is so profound that they avoid any contact with each other, although the “dinosaurs” look much more assertive and posing, while the “mammals” seem to shun publicity in their own country. This also indicates that

the “dynosaurs” feel much better supported by popular beliefs and general sentiments in the country than the “mammals” who constantly have to be sensitive about the diagnosis the public is making about their national sanity. The “mammals” seem essentially to be waiting for the “dynosaurs” to die away in a normal dinosaurish way, all at once and leaving no trace, giving the evolutionary way to normal mammals if not yet homo erectus.

Georgia

# A Country Between Assaults

By DR. GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI  
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Tbilisi

"This is the last act of terrorism in Georgia," the bruised president kept repeating on the TV screen immediately after the 29 August 1995 assassination attempt. A remote-controlled explosion had left the president's unprotected car in flames, and the entire nation in limbo. His survival was so miraculous that evil tongues spread slanderous stories, alleging that he staged the assault. He took action to cope with his major adversary, Jaba Ioseliani, the leader of the "Mkhedrioni" paramilitary faction, and the growing power of the criminal syndicates. Within a few months the main homebred troublemakers like Ioseliani and his deputy security chief, Temur Khachishvili, were in jail. The security chief, Igor Georgadze, a former KGB agent who was later denounced as the main plotter, was hiding out in Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi. Perspective, Volume VIII, Number 4, March-April 1998. A publication of the Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology & Policy at Boston University.

## A COUNTRY BETWEEN ASSAULTS

"This is the last act of terrorism in Georgia", the bruised president kept repeating on the TV screen immediately after the 29 August 1995 assassination attempt. A remote-controlled explosion had left the president's unprotected car in flames, and the entire nation in limbo. His survival was so miraculous that evil tongues spread slanderous stories, alleging that he staged the assault. He took action to cope with his major adversary, Jaba Ioseliani, the leader of the "Mkhedrioni" paramilitary faction, and the growing power of the criminal syndicates. Within a few months the main homebred troublemakers like Ioseliani and his deputy security chief, Temur Khachishvili, were in jail. The security chief, Igor Georgadze, a former KGB agent who was later denounced as the main plotter, was hiding out in Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A final troublemaker (or so it then seemed), former Defense Minister Tengiz Kitovani, was imprisoned after leading a failed, unsanctioned, attempt in mid-1996 to deliver a group of poorly armed persons to the Abkhaz border in a second effort at punishing himself from his earlier military defeat with the breakaway region. Kitovani and Ioseliani had been instrumental in removing former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia in a

This strange alliance between the KGB and criminals did not raise eyebrows in Georgia, where over the previous few years the people have learned not to be surprised at anything. As early as 1992-93 Russia had exploited, and exacerbated, Georgia's conflict with the secessionist region Abkhazia in order to force Georgia to join the CIS and accept Russian military bases on its territory. Since then, Russia's peacekeepers have failed to enforce a CIS-mandated expansion of their zone, which in effect inhibits the return to Abkhazia of 250,000 ethnic Georgians expelled by Abkhaz fighters. Russia continues to view the Caucasus as its sphere of influence and resents Georgia's and Azerbaijan's increasingly Western-oriented policies. Repeatedly Russia has used its military and security leverage to undermine the government and the territorial integrity of Georgia.

After the August 1995 incident, the presidential guard service was strengthened, and Georgian state security expressed full confidence in its ability to prevent any future attempts on the president's life. Public life had since been developing without major incidents, although the breakaway region of Abkhazia, the consequent issue of displaced persons and the energy crisis remained persistent problems. Georgia was slowly building an international reputation as a country able to maintain internal stability despite unresolved disputes and social problems, and therefore eligible for a longer-term and larger-scale partnership with the West — a somewhat uneasy prospect for certain circles in the Russian leadership and the opponents of Shevardnadze's rule at home. The president's party in the Parliament repeatedly assured concerned Westerners that Georgia was irreversibly transcending the chaotic stage of its transition.

On 9 February 1998, however, the nation woke up to learn there had been another attempt on the president's life, once more with heavy artillery involved, and again unsuccessful. The president's armored Mercedes-Benz was attacked this time as he traveled from his suburban residence to downtown, even though the highway

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1992 coup and clearing the path for Shevardnadze. Neither man has been sentenced yet.



was thought to have been properly secured. The shooting involved heavy grenade launchers and lasted long enough to make outsiders wonder naively why helicopters never appeared on the scene and how the attackers' trucks managed to disappear. However, the president once again confirmed his legendary reputation of having been blessed with a tremendous amount of luck. He emerged unharmed, although two bodyguards were killed in the attack.

Among the very first pieces of information broadcast about the assault was the discovery of papers identifying the only dead assailant left at the scene as a Chechen resident of Dagestan. The official Chechen representative later remarked ironically that terrorists would not normally have all their papers and entire records on them. Georgian public opinion was unanimous in assessing the report as a clear attempt to create Georgian/Chechen friction and distrust.<sup>1</sup>

Georgian media, experts and public opinion immediately looked for a Russian trace. Russia was not pleased with the improved prospects of the Caucasus region. An economic revival is anticipated in Azerbaijan due to renewed operation of the northern pipeline route and the increasing likelihood of a Georgian/Azerbaijan pipeline. Moreover, the strengthened Western-oriented Georgian/Azeri alliance, the kernel of the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) formation, was emerging as a prototype of a self-sustaining, united Caucasus. It was emphasized that Russia continued to provide sanctuary for the former Georgian security chief Igor Giorgadze, suspected of plotting the previous assault on Shevardnadze. Giorgadze is the son of Panteleimon Giorgadze, the current leader of Georgia's Communist Party, who has publicly supported the idea of restoring the Soviet Union. Igor Giorgadze reportedly made his getaway via a Russian military flight from the Russian military air-

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<sup>1</sup> Yet, as the notorious terrorist Salman Raduev's claim of responsibility for the latest assault shows, Chechens are not unanimous in supporting Shevardnadze's government in Georgia. Raduev's controversial actions raised questions as to whether he is mentally ill, and/or used by Russian security.

drome, Vaziani, outside Tbilisi. According to some accounts, the latest set of assailants used the same method to flee the country.

In his interview to Russian TV news on the following evening, Shevardnadze pointed directly at Russia as the most probable plotter.<sup>1</sup> The reaction of the Russian leadership and media was that of utmost astonishment about the Georgian allegations, although a few Russian analysts could not resist admitting there was logic to those claims. Yet the prevailing assessment, especially after the tragicomic hostage-taking in Western Georgia took place, was that Russia is always held responsible for destabilizing events in the Caucasus, while the Caucasians fail to establish law and order at home. For his part, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov made light of the incident. While visiting Kosovo, he attempted a “promotion” of Russian arms and tried to demonstrate that a Russian grenade launcher can pierce a Mercedes.<sup>2</sup>

Among all the hypotheses and theories that quickly emerged, there was one possibility that experts, journalists, even officials failed to consider: that long-forgotten Zviadists were responsible. Although the nationalist former president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who was deposed in the winter of 1991 and later fled to Chechnya, had died, some of his supporters still remain.

In view of the growing scandal, the Georgian security service, at last, did its job: all those suspected of involvement in the assassination attempt (all of them Zviadist) were promptly detained. While some prominent Zviadists, most notably Gamsakhurdia’s widow, Manana Archvadze-Gamsakhurdia, and the leader of the political wing “Roundtable – Free Georgia”, Tengiz Kikachishvili, denounced the assassination attempt and its organizers, others retaliated against the government. On 10 February in Zugdidi, a region in

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<sup>1</sup> The president emphasized evidence of Russia’s reluctance to play a constructive role in clearing up the post-Soviet mess. Support for the separatists and failure of Russia’s mediation of the Abkhazia dispute, neglect of Georgian demands to give up Giorgadze, etc., may be seen as links in the same chain. Of course, no physical evidence of direct Russian involvement in the latest assault was available.

<sup>2</sup> Radio Tbilisi, 23 March 1998; FBIS-SOV-98-082.

Western Georgia (near the Abkhazian border) known as a Zviadist stronghold, four UN mission observers were taken hostage by a group led by a previously unknown character, Gocha Esebua. Events that followed were reminiscent of old Italian movies: Esebua gave interviews to the media while curious villagers replaced each other at a permanent feast in the house where the hostages were kept. The hostages praised the care they were receiving, while Esebua sought to bargain the hostages for nothing short of the release of the persons held in connection with the assassination attempt against Shevardnadze, the restoration of “legitimate” rule in Georgia and the removal of Russian military bases from the country. The outcome seemed to promise peace: Esebua fled shortly after all of the hostages were released. However, within a few weeks the terrorist leader was killed by Georgian internal ministry personnel, and brutality took a new turn: half a dozen gunmen, remarkably those known as having reconciled with Shevardnadze’s rule, were shot at Esebua’s funeral in front of several hundred people. Shortly after the attack the Georgian interior ministry stated that the same people were involved in the assassination attempt against the president and the shooting at the cemetery, with the aim of disrupting the frail process of reconciliation between the supporters of the former president and the current government. Local papers came to the same conclusion: The terrorist act in Zugdidi was committed by “irreconcilables” from Esebua’s group.<sup>1</sup>

The new assault on the president showed with clarity how naive it was to imagine that the once-powerful Zviadists would finally accept their defeat in the civil war of 1991-92 and the consequent neglect from the Georgian media and general public. Just prior to the assault, all currently active political parties and figures in Georgia dismissed the Zviadists as powerless. In the post-civil war years the Shevardnadze administration had been consolidating power, achieving wide recognition domestically and abroad. The Zviadists inside the country seemed scarce, divided and discouraged. In the

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<sup>1</sup> Segodnya, 7 April 1998.

meanwhile, the notorious Chechen terrorist leader (and late President Dzhokhar Dudayev's son-in-law) Salman Raduyev had sworn to help bring Gamsakhurdia's followers back to power. Nobody in Georgia paid any attention to that pledge. Everyone was surprised that a Zviadist group was the primary executor of the latest attempt, although the identity of Zviadists' backers remains a mystery.

Whatever the investigation may reveal about the structure of the plot and cast of characters involved, the assassination attempt exposed several important problems within Georgian society:

- There is an unsatisfactory system for government/ population feedback;
- Enormous responsibility has been placed upon one person, the president;
- There has been no public assessment of the political effects of the 1992 coup;
- Defeated opponents have been substantially underestimated in terms of their readiness for action, ability to create liaisons, and outside support;
- A combination of political, economic and geostrategic conditions favorable for the country's immediate development, and unfavorable for Russia's strategic plans for the Caucasus region, has developed;
- The status of reform and economic growth in Georgia has been assessed too optimistically; and there is massive corruption in the country.

Stone-age mafias have been replaced by more sophisticated groups that are better disguised than Ioseliani's "Mkhedrioni", yet no less dangerous. The most visible corruption takes place in the energy industry. Gasoline is no longer sold from guarded trucks but is now available at convenient gas stations. On the other hand, Tbilisi, not to mention the forgotten countryside, is often poorly lit; the population heats its homes with kerosene and cooks with (exorbitantly priced) liquefied gas. Restoring the natural gas supply and determining who pays for electricity and who does not would

complicate life and reduce the incomes of criminals who feel at liberty while anti-corruption agencies are restrained by international standards of human rights.

Fortunately there are signs that Shevardnadze's government is trying to address some of these difficulties. The president had repeatedly called for dialogue with his opponents and, even in the midst of the Zugdidi hostage-taking incident, indicated his willingness to negotiate. Shevardnadze stressed his desire to reconcile with the Zviadists by releasing 2,500 prisoners through an amnesty program and commuting the death sentences of 52 Gamsakhurdia supporters.<sup>1</sup> The latter came as a result of Georgia's repeal of capital punishment, passed in order to comply with the requirements for admission to the Council of Europe. Similarly there are some indications that the government and the parliament are taking new measures to curb corruption in the energy ministry. The recent dismissal of the Minister of Fuel and Energy, Davit Zubitashvili, who has been accused by parliament of embezzlement and the unauthorized sale of Tbilisi's crude oil, may constitute the beginning of an effective anti-corruption campaign.

No doubt, Georgia is in better shape than it had been before the 1995 elections: the country is ruled much more competently and intelligently. The parliament, led by well-educated persons, has even revealed some young rising stars. One such MP is Mikheil Saakashvili, the Columbia-trained chairman of the Law and Constitution Committee who is the most active and unbiased promoter of legislature reforms.

Against all the hardships of chilly, blacked-out winters and low incomes, the population has enjoyed greater freedoms than in most other post-Soviet countries. While Shevardnadze has aggressively fought the groups that took up arms in opposition to his government, the same cannot be said of his treatment of political opponents. Parliamentarians, political parties and media outlets that pursue divergent policies are not molested by the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Frankfurter Rundschau, 14 March 1998; FBIS-SOV-98-074.

Perhaps the government has recognized that, if internal problems remain unattended, the next terrorist action may really turn out to be the last. And in view of what has happened, who can completely discard this possibility? At the parliament session called immediately after the assault, Chairman Zurab Zhvania expressed his firm conviction that the terrorists and their backers could not have stirred up serious trouble in the country if they had succeeded: all of the state structures would operate normally, and law and order would be maintained.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, many believe that, if Shevardnadze were to be suddenly removed, the competing political groups in Georgia, even the smaller ones, would immediately start a ruthless fight for power, even at the risk of destabilizing the overall situation in the country and beyond. Larger neighboring states would offer support to the more compliant groups. An externally supported coup might turn out to be an appalling reality. It is no secret that the greater part of the international credit and Western support, as well as humanitarian and technical assistance, granted to Georgia in recent years has been connected with Shevardnadze's personality as the country's leader. Accordingly, the country might lose a good part of the international support it now enjoys if the leadership changes.

1998

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<sup>1</sup> The government-controlled TV channel broadcast that parliament session live. A detailed account of the session also appeared in *Izvestia*, 11 February 1998.

## Georgia's Security Problems in Post-Soviet Transition

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Tbilisi, Georgia

1998

## Contents:

Georgia Defines its Security

- Structure of the System of Security for Georgia

- Main Components of the Security System of Georgia

Internal Sources of Security

External Sources of Security

Internal Sources of Insecurity

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, 22 June, 1998.

Dynamics of the Perceptions of Threat till 2006

Probable vs. Preferred Futures, and How They Correspond According to the Four Scenarios

Policies That Could Facilitate Preferred Developments

## GEORGIA'S SECURITY PROBLEMS IN POST-SOVIET TRANSITION

### GEORGIA DEFINES ITS SECURITY

“Security” in post-Soviet peoples’ minds has primarily been associated with “state security”, or KGB. Nobody in the Soviet times would identify state security as his(her) own business, unless s(he) got into trouble for political reasons. After Georgia became independent, people started to realize their own personal security was linked to security of the state. Growing understanding has been that the country needed a comprehensive conception of its security. It was from the very start decided to take a broad approach to the issue, to make this conception as comprehensive as possible. When President Shevardnadze decided in 1995 to create a State Commission on Developing a National Security Concept for Georgia (the Commission includes twenty-seven prominent specialists and state figures, and is chaired jointly by the Foreign Minister Irakli Menagarishvili and State Security Minister Jemal Gakhokidze), one of the first problems this activity encountered was a terminology problem. There is more than one term denoting “security” in Georgian lan-

guage, and some specialists tried (as later proved, unsuccessfully) to introduce a term different from that traditionally used in Soviet times. Another problem was how to interpret "national": should it mean "pertaining to the Georgian nation", domestic usage of terms would immediately turn it into "pertaining to ethnic Georgians in Georgia", or more generalized, "pertaining to a titular ethnic group in the state". Thus "national security" would be understood as excluding all national minorities, all non-Georgians, creating them a security problem! On the other hand, it is well understood that the country should move towards meeting internationally recognized standards of civil society if it wants to survive. So "national security" is likely in stay in the finalized documents, with comments on what is meant by "national".

General public in Georgia turned out to be unprepared both for the values of civil society, and for their verbal expression. Using "nation" in the sense of "people", or "all citizens" of the country means equalizing ethnic Georgians and non-Georgians in rights, and thus is perceived as containing a threat in view of high ethnic diversity in Georgia. An essentially mediaeval ideal of an ethnocentric unitary centralized state is perceived in masses of population as a guarantee of justice and stability, and any discussed models of decentralized federal arrangement of the state are perceived as equally apprehensive.

At the moment the conception undergoes final stages of approval, and a finalized and approved version should soon be available. The document will be far from perfect, and will probably need further amendments. Still, it is a historic moment in the nation's self-realization. The proposed versions of the conception have significantly contributed to a better understanding of national security and to the studies of internal and external threats, from political and military to environmental and informational.



## **STRUCTURE OF THE SYSTEM OF SECURITY FOR GEORGIA**

The Conception will stress the point that Georgia does not have much time for developing its independent statehood in a complicated and rapidly changing environment, so it is a matter of good timing to manage to build the self-sustainable political institutes of democratic civil society. The general strategic course of country's development had been outlined in President's platform, and defines the following strategic directions of the country's development:

### **(1) Building of Statehood:**

- Strengthening of the state sovereignty and restoration of the territorial integrity;
- Furthering of the constitutional process;
- Settlement of the regional conflicts;
- Reform of the system of state government;
- Development of a democratic political system and consolidation of the Parliament of Georgia;
- Reform and development of the executive power;
- Decentralization of the system of state management and development of the system of municipal government;
- Development and improvement of international relations;
- Protection of the state borders and control over migration processes;
- Military construction;
- Environmental and national resource protection.

### **(2) Building of Civil Society:**

- Human rights protection;
- Consolidation of the national unity;
- Building of civil society institutions.

### **(3) Social and Cultural Development:**

- Creation and development of the social security system;
- Control of migration processes;

- Development of culture and educational system;
- Development of the social health care system.

#### (4) Economic Reform and Economic Development:

- Development of market economy;
- Development of the private sector;
- Creation of a favorable macro-economic environment;
- Integration into the world economic system;
- Liberalization of the external economic relationships;
- Attraction of foreign investments;
- Active participation in international and regional economic organizations (e.g. BSEC, CIS, etc.);
- Carrying out a structural reform of the economy;
- Reorganization of state institutions supervising the economy sphere;
- Acceleration of the processes of privatization;
- Development of the strategic priority sectors: energy, agriculture, public transportation, communications infrastructure, banking and financial sectors;
- Development of the industries exporting their production abroad.

1998

### **MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE SECURITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA**

Based on the above strategic directions, the following components of the unified security system are singled out:

- Reform of the state government system and the national security;
- Settlement of the regional conflicts and the national security;
- Economic security;
- Foreign policy and the national security;
- Military aspects and the national security;

- Social security in view of national security;
- Ecological security;
- Security in the energy sphere;
- Informational security;
- Control over migration processes and national security;
- Law enforcement and citizens' personal security;
- Public education and national security;
- Public health care and national security.

From this list of priorities it is already clear nothing more than a first approximation is being made to understanding what national security concept should contain and/or cover. Remarkable is the appearance in several places of “control over migration processes”, which reflects a deep public concern about stability of demographic situation in the country and the refugee problem. Specificity of Georgia’s security problems is determined by its geopolitical location, as well as ethnic/cultural diversity, etc. As is stressed in the draft conception, “Restructuring of the social system is a period of utmost obscurity and vagueness for the entire society. The currently experienced processes and phenomena are beyond comprehension for many, and the future looks unclear and indefinite”. In a situation like this the unity in the society about its basic goals and orientations acquires supreme importance. This unity should be based on harmonious relations between all ethnic and social groups in the country, and the existence of a system of values shared by all. It is stressed more than once that “Georgia should restore its political integrity, i.e. jurisdiction over the breakaway regions”, although the document is far from efficiently focusing on, or explaining reasons for internal dissonance. The emphasis is done on strengthening the power and law enforcement institutions of the state.

In the following sections we will distinguish between “security threats” which may stand for prolonged and persisting problems the country faces, and “sources of insecurity” focusing on what or who produces or can produce a security threat. Identifying a source of

insecurity may facilitate description of a security threat, and vice versa, understanding a security threat may lead towards revealing a source of insecurity. As we will see, there are very few sources of security in Georgia.

### **INTERNAL SOURCES OF SECURITY**

Not at all being free from corruption, the police has been slowly yet stably enforcing law and order, the process being backed up by passing the relevant legislature in the Parliament (order and quietness in the streets has, after an appalling cowboy movie-style period of shooting and looting, been imposed mostly as a result of energetic efforts of former Interior Minister Kviriaia, who later was moved to State Security Minister and had to resign from that position after MP Irina Sarishvili accused him of heavy abuses of official position). And last, not the least, a longer-standing source of stability is a down-to-earth (although superficially romantic) and skeptical Georgian people, entrepreneurially inclined and courageous.

1998

### **EXTERNAL SOURCES OF SECURITY**

An important security source should imply from a declared neutrality and non-liaison status Georgian leadership has been moving towards, in spite of angry voices of patriots in the Parliament. People now realize what naive and ridiculous a demand it sounded to invite NATO tanks to replace and oust Russian military from Georgia.

### **INTERNAL SOURCES OF INSECURITY**

Among the major internal sources of insecurity are the lack of experience of independent statehood and an unstable state (and stage) of transition the society is in. The country is moving to what a great part of population is unprepared for (cf. in analysis of terrorist actions below). Not many are yet determined in whether they seriously believe in norms of civil and democratic society to soon become guidelines of their own and the state structures' lives.

Uncertainty and unreliability of the corrupted court and justice system, along with public disbelief in the justice system in general has been notable in the country (Committee for Legal and Constitutional Matters in the Parliament chaired by Mikheil Saakashvili, undertook a profound reform of legislature, among which the most painful part appears to be a reform of the outdated penitentiary system). This can be seen as part of the lack of trust in a law-based state, civil society and democratic values. E.g. people firmly believe the U.S. is law-abiding because a strong and well-paid police is on the alert, not because people through their elected representative bodies have collectively decided not to complicate their lives by allowing corruption to govern their lives.

Another internal source of instability is a public disbelief in existence of an efficient, constructive and organized opposition to the political establishment (legacy of totalitarian mentality), an indispensable feature of any democratic and civil society.

### **EXTERNAL SOURCES OF INSECURITY**

Russian political pressure and manipulation in order to preserve and secure Russia's strategic/military presence in the region remains the main external source of instability for Georgia. Russia's role in aggravating and manipulating ethnic disputes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been reason for serious problems in Georgian/Russian relationships in the last years.

The other major player in the region is Turkey. The relationships between Georgia and Turkey have been ever amiable and productive since the border was opened for trade in Gorbachev's times. Yet, Turkey's domination in foreign trade and supply of goods may be considered as a security risk for Georgia, like any actual monopoly.

Remarkable is an attitude towards Armenia, ostensibly balanced and neutral but revealing a deep concern inside. Public sentiment in Georgia tends to be that Armenia would support Abkhazia's, as well as other unrepresented states' independence claims in order to facilitate the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, and

would support the autonomization movement of ethnic Armenians in Javakheti to maintain a lever of political pressure on Georgia should it be needed.

The picture would not be complete without mentioning the atomic power station outside Yerevan, perceived by Georgia's population as a continuous threat, "a clear and present danger" in their vicinity. After Chernobyl nobody believes in security measures, or reliability of construction of atomic stations in the former Soviet Union. This is also what colors perception of Armenia in Georgians.

### **THE DEATH OF THE COMMONWEALTH, THE BIRTH OF THE AGE OF AXES AND CORRIDORS**

In the period immediately preceding the collapse of the Empire Mikhail Gorbachev obsessively stressed the idea of "*obnovlyonnaya federaciya*" (a renewed/revitalized Federation) that should have replaced the Soviet Union with a union as attractive to its members as to maintain the major levers of control intact. In the years that followed the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet empire very few in Russia believed that the process was irreversible. Said in a private conversation a high-rank Russian Foreign Ministry official in 1994, "Two more years will be enough for all the Republics to realize: it is time to stop playing this game of independence and get back together again". The Republics should not have survived as independent states, but they did, and even the ethnic/territorial conflicts representing legal deadlocks could not arrest this development.

A similar attitude applied to the Russian model of reintegration of the former Soviet Republics through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The Commonwealth was designed in Moscow as a deterring mechanism to prevent further dissolution of the remnants of empire. Upgrading of this tool should have turned it into an efficient reintegration and reunification mechanism for getting the former Soviet republics together again under the Russian dominance. Great bulk of the Western economic assistance for the

former Soviet Union (FSU) going to support, and allegedly, to democratize Russia, should have been a crucial supporting factor here. The West would feed Russia to assist the democratization process, and Russia would use this support to militarize and finally restore as an empire. If this plan was considered appallingly realistic by many immediately after the collapse of the USSR, now it is being treated as having little prospect to materialize.

First stage of reintegration was to be triggered by the scheduled Russia/Belarus Union, and a grand interim goal was to achieve reintegration of four largest Soviet Republics: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. This would be a real turning point in post-Soviet development. However, Belarussian President Lukashenko proved to be more impulsive and unpredictable than his Russian patrons might imagine. Diminishing prospect of the Russia/Belarus alliance is perceived in Georgia as one of the major evidences of decline in the CIS. Yet, mystification of Russia's expansive capacities in the eyes of Georgian public means also the ability to redress CIS, or to continue indefinitely attempts of forced reintegration under new disguise. As was noted above, real rescue from Russia's supervision is seen by many in Georgia only in disintegration of Russia as a grand power.

### **DYNAMICS OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT TILL 2006**

Extreme nationalist forces in Georgia have little chance to organize to a degree that was possible towards the decline of the USSR, and to direct and lead society under the banner of extremist ideology. What is left for them is to arrange or participate in plots against the main stronghold of security in the country, which is the President, and to try to use the advantage of climbing up to power as soon as the society again appears in a chaotic and uncontrolled state. Since August of 1995 there have been two implemented although unsuccessful, and several prevented attempts on Eduard Shevardnadze's life.

The February 9, 1998 assault on the President showed with clarity how naive it was to imagine once powerful Zviadists would finally put up with their defeat in civil war of 1991/92 and the consequent neglect from Georgian media and public opinion. Just prior to the assault, all currently active political parties and figures in Georgia were agreed in that Zviadists represented no power and expected no future. In the post-civil war years the Shevardnadze administration had been consolidating power, achieving wide recognition domestically and abroad. The Zviadists inside the country looked scarce, divided and discouraged. It was a surprise for everybody that it turned out to be a Zviadist group who was primarily responsible for carrying out the latest attempt, although it is, and may stay a mystery who stood behind the political non-entities revealed. Yet it always makes sense to see what makes the assault possible at home, before looking abroad.

1998

Whatever structure of the plot and cast of characters involved are going to be displayed in the course of investigation, the reasons of what has happened should boil down to the following. First of all, it is (a) an unsatisfactory government/people feedback and enormous actual responsibility transferred to one person, (b) the lack of publicly made official political assessment of the change of rule in Georgia as a result of January 1992 coup, (c) underestimation of defeated opponents, based on a false picture of their readiness for action, creation of liaisons, and outside support, (d) a complex of political, economic and geo-strategic conditions favorable for the country's immediate development, and unfavorable for Russia's strategic plans for the Caucasus region, (e) an artificial picture of the status of reform in Georgia, upgraded to the World Bank requirements, and last, not the least, (f) redressment of corruption in the country.

Stone-age mafias have been replaced by more sophisticated ones, and better disguised than Jaba Ioseliani's "Mkhedrioni", but no less dangerous. Let us take the most visible side of corruption. Gasoline is no more sold from Kitovani's gunner-guarded trucks but at comfortable gas stations. On the other hand, a striking fact is that



on the eve of 21<sup>st</sup> century electricity is a number one luxury item for Georgians, to the extent that whole cities have permanently to do without it and, at the same time, it is... being exported abroad. The capital of Georgia, let alone the forgotten countryside, is for better part of the year poorly lit and heated by kerosene, and cooking cannot be done without liquefied gas-cylinders sold to the population at extremely high prices. Restoring natural gas supply and supplying power to those who pay the bills (as was effectively managed in Yerevan, Armenia) would complicate life and reduce incomes of criminalized groups who would not feel at large without connections in high places, while the government/parliament appointed anti-corruption agencies feel equally restrained by the needs of a political moment. Dirty linen has to be washed at home. The country needs to satisfy certain criteria to be eligible for European structures (like full membership of the Council of Europe) the President would like to enforce its incorporation into to help Georgia further out of the crisis. This would obviously also strengthen his rule, so the efforts of his internal, as well as external adversaries are concentrated on preventive measures, including destructive ones.

If internal problems remain unattended, the next terrorist action may really turn out to be the last. And who can, in view of what has already happened, completely discard this possibility? At the Parliament session called immediately upon the assault, the Chairman Zurab Zhvania expressed his firm conviction that terrorists and whoever organized them could not stir up serious trouble in the country if they succeeded: all the state structures would operate normally, and law and order would be maintained. Yet, independent analysis and research of public opinion unambiguously indicate that a degree of destabilization might be achieved sufficient for implying significant changes in the country's leadership, and subsequent changes in political and economic orientation.

If Shevardnadze was suddenly removed, the competing political groups in Georgia, even the smaller ones, would immediately start a ruthless fight for power, even at the risk of destabilizing the overall situation in the country and beyond. Some of the bigger neighboring

states would offer their support for more compliant ones. Historically, Russia and Turkey have had immediate competing interest in the region (at the moment, Turkey is a number one foreign trade partner for Georgia and is guaranteed to dominate economically, so it is hardly an issue for her to promote destabilization. Russia is different: the lack of economic incentive has to be made up by political manipulation). An externally supported coup might turn out to be an appalling reality. Under such circumstances, the U.S. and NATO would be unlikely to become deeply involved with events in Georgia (as they were during the civil war and the war in Abkhazia), and many would say later that Russia had no choice but to take up reluctantly what nobody else wanted to deal with.

1998

What would happen in and to the country once Eduard Shevardnadze was no longer in power? Would chaos ensue or are the state institutions stable enough to ensure a smooth transition to a new president and administration? No doubt, Georgia is in no case what it used to be before the 1995 elections: the country is ruled much more competently and intelligently, and the Parliament is led by well educated persons. Against all the hardships of chilly, blacked-out winters and scarce incomes, people have been relieved to enjoy more freedoms than in most other post-Soviet countries. On the other hand, it is no secret that greater part of the international credit and Western support, as well as humanitarian and technical assistance granted to Georgia in the recent years has been connected with Shevardnadze's personality as country's leader. Accordingly, the country might immediately experience the risk of losing a good part of the international support it now enjoys. In all cases, Georgia would encounter a troubled and messy period before things could clear up.

### **PROBABLE VS PREFERRED FUTURES, AND HOW THEY CORRESPOND ACCORDING TO THE FOUR SCENARIOS**

Some notes from the Discussions at the Brown-ICCN Seminar at ICCN in Tbilisi, October 5, 1996:

Reintegration under Russian dominance (Scenario 1) is the most undesirable in Georgia. It is seen possible only within the framework of both a general failure of the Caucasus region to attract serious interest of Western capital and politics, and a strenuous and successful effort of Russia to “divide and rule” by destabilizing societies and manipulating conflicts to the end of weakening and discrediting the newly independent states. Consolidation and economic boom in Russia should accompany the opposite processes developing in the “near abroad”. Such transformation is unlike to take place before 2006.

Russia’s influence has visibly decreased in Georgia since the period immediately following the end of the Georgian-Abkhaz war, when the country was humiliated and forced to join the CIS, accept additional Russian military bases on its territory and the Russian supervision of the appointment of three power ministers, Defense, Interior, and State Security. Decline of Russia’s influence in Georgia is seen in greater liberty of the President and his team to appoint power ministers than before. The latest and completing act was the replacement of the pro-Russian Defense Minister Vardiko Nadibaidze with the younger and Western-trained David Tevzadze.

*Scenario 1* is seen as having smaller prospect to materialize than *Scenario 3* (unregulated disintegration) if existing ethno-territorial disputes are not resolved till 2006 which is quite realistic. Further unregulated disintegration of the post-Soviet political space means materialization of direct threat to the territorial integrity of the countries, along with inability of the countries together with their allies to effectively oppose this threat and reverse the process. Remarkably, there is little understanding that unregulated disintegrative process is dangerous and undesirable as such: in Georgia it is perceived as positive if it pertains to Russia, more or less indifferently if it pertains to other post-Soviet states, undesirable and dangerous if it pertains to South-Caucasian neighbor states, and especially if it touches Georgia.

*Scenario 2*, or cooperative integration is seen as the most unrealistic of all. There are no incentives powerful enough to stimulate

integrative processes between post-Soviet states to the extent of merging in one state, or creating super-national formations. The only realistic way to integrate is in creation of temporary treaty-based alliances and associations, mostly in the sphere of business and economy. This fully pertains to the South Caucasus nations. *Scenario 3* belongs to undesirable ones in Georgia, for integration with any post-Soviet “partner in misery” would sound strange and dangerous for the state sovereignty and integrity.

Finally, the most desirable in Georgia and also perceived as growingly probable is *Scenario 4*, or cooperative independence. It is also understood that competitive independence is a more realistic development in post-Soviet inter-state relationships, yet cooperation and competition are not perceived as mutually exclusive options, and certainly more desirable than any sort of political integration.

Probability of Scenarios, as seen in Georgia:

1. Unregulated disintegration (3);
2. Cooperative independence (4);
3. Integration under Russian dominance (1);
4. Cooperative integration (2).

Desirability of Scenarios, as seen in Georgia:

1. Cooperative independence (4);
2. Unregulated disintegration (3);
3. Cooperative integration (2);
4. Integration under Russian dominance (1).

From these charts and the previous analysis it is clear that Georgians are equally apprehensive of any sort of disintegration within the country, and any sort of integration between the newly independent states. This may partly be explained by misunderstanding of the term “integration” which is loaded with too strong a meaning including long-term political obligations implying the actual merging of the states into one another (notably, smaller ones into bigger). Unregulated disintegration was seen in recent years as more probable than cooperative independence, for a fatalistic fear of “the Big Bear” dictated the destiny of the NIS. Yet, this is the most dynamic

point in perception of future, especially with decline of Russia's influence and defeat in the Chechen war. A different matter is the nature of independence in Scenario 4: cooperative in certain cases, but also (or even more) competitive and maybe conflicting. On the other hand, it may be seen that unregulated disintegration (on an external scale, not within the country) is even more preferred than cooperative integration, and the dangers of unregulated disintegration are underestimated, compared with overestimated dangers of the cooperative integration. The overall perception of future in Georgia is not very optimistic.

### **POLICIES THAT COULD FACILITATE PREFERRED DEVELOPMENTS**

What could Georgian state do to prevent undesirable scenarios from materialization, and, on the other hand, foster current developments to preferred ends?

First of all, Georgia should reach a degree of internal stabilization and economic growth sufficient for the state to fulfil partner obligations and the role of a guarantor for foreign investments. The country should firmly continue in its developments of democratic institutions, rule of law, and value system of civil society. It is very important that Georgia affirms in its neutrality status. Awareness of and educational activities in human and minority rights should significantly grow in the country. Balanced policies towards neighbors and large powers are indispensable for ensuring the country's security and participation in advantageous and profitable regional and international programs. Both legislation and public consciousness should leave no doubt that national minorities will receive maximally liberal regime in realizing their learning, teaching and using their languages, developing ethno-cultural aspirations and be sufficiently protected from any forms of discrimination. Resolution of the internal conflicts representing a direct threat to the territorial integrity of the country should be achieved as a result of synergic effect of the above factors, giving in turn a momentum for

a new stage of the country's accelerated development. The country should find effective tools to cope with growingly sophisticated corruption. If Georgia effectively plays its role in strengthening the GUAM and uniting the Caucasus, this will further decrease chances for reintegration under external domination.

What could Russian Federation do to assist (whether willingly or not) the scenarios preferred by Georgians? The democratization process should develop so as to prove its irreversible character at a given historical stage, and the balanced policies in "near abroad", as well as towards her own subjects of Federation should build enough credit for and confidence in Russia among the NIS. Successful peacemaking and mediation role in internal conflicts might significantly change the perception of Russia's attitudes towards its former "younger brothers".

On the international scale Russia should abandon her confrontational attitude towards the West, especially the U.S. and NATO, and achieve a stable reputation of a European culture determined to play an independent significant role in the world affairs as an integral part of the global civilizational processes, not shadowed at the same time by any ambitious, expansional or domineering strategies, especially towards its former satellites.

What could the Caucasus nations do to facilitate a favorable future of the region as seen from Georgia? Ideally, all three South Caucasus states and the North Caucasus peoples, are seen as most protected from great-power policies and benefiting from their geostrategic location if they develop active economic cooperation and manage to design a common security architecture for the entire region, strong enough to promote an all-Caucasian idea to balance Russia's policies in its bordering North-Caucasian republics and oblasts. Realistically, in spite of the unsolved interstate disputes and varying strategic orientations, the three South-Caucasian states should elaborate a common platform for regional cooperation in the spheres of establishing free economic zones, and providing joint border control. The continuing Azeri-Armenian dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, and the growing isolation of Armenia from the

strategic international plans of using the Caucasus oil deposits and transit routes is a major obstacle on the way to the consolidation of the region. The Abkhazia conflict, as the May 1998 violent clashes in the bordering Gali region showed, also has a destructive potential to prevent the Caucasian concord from materialization.

What could the West do? There had been exaggerated expectation in Georgia about the Western involvement in Georgian affairs, later changed by a deep frustration. Still most people in Georgia realize that behind a relatively stabilized and liberalized situation in the country is a massive Western support of the policies of President and his government, and bigger things like large-scale investments and constructions may become possible only after the major obstacles, such as ethno-territorial conflicts are removed from their way. Another and special question is how and to what extent leading international organizations can assist in this process.

### **THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN STABILIZING THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN GEORGIA**

There has been a general consensus in the Georgian society about the presence and activities of foreign embassies and the offices of humanitarian aid-delivering organizations in the country. There has been a growingly controversial assessment in Georgian society of the overall activities and the purpose of presence of the missions of the UN and OSCE. Since late 1992 when the missions were opened, these have been welcomed not only as a balance to Russia's manipulating and destabilizing role in the region, but as powerful tools of the international community in resolving the disputes. What the Georgian society largely expected from the UN in the first place, and the OSCE, were quick and energetic efforts that would end in effective restoration of the Georgian jurisdiction in and return of the IDPs to the breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia. When the sought solution was not achieved, the situation was immediately interpreted in large sections of Georgian society as weakness or reluctance of international organizations to get in-

volved in the disputes on the Georgian side. The prevailing public sentiment has been that Georgia is no big deal for the West to irritate “the Big Bear”, and the UN and OSCE are bureaucratic structures concerned more about their own survival and proliferation rather than restoring justice and providing solutions to disputes. Assisting in and monitoring the peacekeeping in the conflict zones, and in organizing negotiations was not perceived in most part of the Georgian society as a sufficient basis for their mandate.

Since 1994 the UN activities in Georgia have been diversified: instead of one Resident Representative in charge of UNDP, UNHCR, UNDHA, UNICEF, UNOMIG, etc. activities in Georgia, the set of relatively independent UN offices were created. The leading resident UN office unofficially became UNDP, and the UN Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG) developed as an independent force directly reporting to the Secretary General of the UN. Due to critical conditions created for the country's economy and development of independent statehood, the international community made vigorous efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance, especially for IDPs from conflict zones, and to assist in creating of state institutions and balancing the internal problems. Of numerous international organizations that were active in Georgia in recent years, the OSCE and UN obviously had a special mandate. It was unofficially decided to “divide” the conflict zones between them in the following way: the UN would be a leading international institution assisting the peace process in Abkhazia, and the OSCE in South Ossetia. The Abkhazia conflict turned out to be immeasurably more complicated; yet apart from the objective differences between the two zones, the OSCE activities in most part of the mandate period have been assessed as more efficient and assertive. Let us consider the case of the OSCE activities as an example.

The OSCE sent a mission of long duration to Georgia in 1992. The mandate included the following:

- To assist in negotiations between the parties of Georgia's conflicts, aimed at achieving peaceful resolution of the



Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts by political means;

- To monitor, with their consent, the joint peacekeeping force which was established in Tskhinvali according to the Sochi agreement of 24 June 1992;
- To foster cooperation between the parties;
- To encourage respect for human rights;
- To assist the creation of democratic institutions in the country; and
- To support the principle of a free press and to monitor its implementation.

As far as the Georgian-Ossetian conflict is concerned, the mission mandate lays down the following:

- To assist in the creation of a wider political consensus, within which a firm political resolution of the conflict can be achieved on the basis of the principles and declarations of the OSCE;
- To initiate dialogue between all sides to the conflict by means of “Round Table” meetings, with the aim of demonstrating and trying to remove sources of tension and providing political reconciliation across the zone of conflict;
- To monitor the joint peacekeeping force, establishing and supporting contact with the military command of these forces, collecting information on the military situation, reporting breaches of the existing ceasefire and highlighting the political consequences of these or any other military actions for the commanders on the ground;
- To play an active role in the work of the Joint Control Commission in working out specific proposals for resolving the conflict; and
- To establish contacts with the local authorities and representatives of the population, and to demonstrate a visible presence of the OSCE throughout the area.

In relation to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, the mandate of the mission makes provision for regular liaison with the UN while carefully following unfolding events and reporting on them regularly to the OSCE. This allows the CiO to participate in the negotiations held under the aegis of the UN. However, unlike in South Ossetia, the mission does not monitor the peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia nor observance of the ceasefire agreement.

In March 1994, the mandate was broadened to include a number of Georgia-wide activities, such as:

- To encourage respect for human rights and basic freedoms;
- To assist in developing juridical and democratic institutions and processes, including consultation in drafting the new constitution, the introduction of legislation on citizenship and the creation of independent judicial organs, and to monitor the conduct of elections; and
- To coordinate these activities with the OSCE HCNM and the ODIHR, to cooperate with the EU and other organizations working in this field in Georgia.

Assessments of the OSCE role in Georgia vary on different sides of the conflict, and in different sections of Georgian society. The Georgians welcomed the OSCE role of providing international supervision of the Russian “peacekeeping” role at a time when Georgia was weak and very much at the mercy of Russia. The mission has been successful in its task of monitoring the peacekeeping forces. In the recent years though the importance of the OSCE for Georgia has decreased. On the other hand, it has been crucial for the South Ossetians, for whom the OSCE provides an important link with the international community. Furthermore, most part of the humanitarian assistance delivered to Tskhinvali and the Ossetian villages since the end of the armed clashes was (co-)organized and/or monitored by the OSCE. Objectively, the OSCE mission has not yet expired its potential in stabilizing the internal situation and assisting democratic developments in Georgia.

# 1998

## Ukraine: Renewed Paralysis at the Center and New Trouble in Crimea?

## The post-Soviet trans-

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Published in Journal ACE: Analysis of Current Events, the Association of the Study of Nations, May 1998, Volume 10, No. 5.

## THE CAUCASUS AND EUROPE

It is a truism that the newly independent states are in transition. The following post-Soviet states would like to be recognized as prospectively European (not only geographically, but also culturally, politically, and legally): Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. The appropriateness of including the latter in the list might raise some doubts, if not for the oil fueling a Western pro-Azeri orientation. Russia considers itself European-by-definition, as well as Asian-by-definition. The largest country on the map understandably differs in this regard from the rest of the NIS. Russia was not really “one of the Soviet nations” and could never liberate itself from the domineering global self-image personified by its recently restored emblem featuring a double-headed eagle.

Strange though it may sound, it was the unifying nature of Soviet rule that has imposed European attitudes on most of the republics. European-style Soviet cultural and behavioral standards, utilizing classic Russian cultural traditions, have contributed significantly to the cultural formation of the Union republics. Although this cultural formation was, for the most part, natural to the above nations, it

was artificial to, and imposed upon, the Central Asian nations who never quite identified with it, yet complied out of the necessity to follow the rules of the game of survival. The South Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan) has been a region internally diversified yet growing in its European orientation: Armenia, Christian since 301-314 AD, is noted for its political ties with Russia; moderately Islamic Azerbaijan is building bridges to the West while maintaining its Central Asian cultural ties; while Georgia, Christianized between AD 325 and AD 337, is seeking any ties on the Western side of the globe, while trying at the same time to reasonably appease the "Big Bear".

1998

The post-Soviet transition in the South Caucasus seems to be leading to Europe – through the Baltics. In order to conceptually clarify the matter, let us consider their virtual future in what might be called "greater Europe". Any of the afore-mentioned NIS are dreaming of full "citizenship" in the unified Europe, but are really only eligible for "legal alien" status: i.e., an open door that may, at any moment, slam shut before them if they fail to satisfy some explicit or implicit criteria. Understanding very well that there is a hyperspatial distance they have to shortcut in order to reach Western Europe, the South Caucasian states would at least like to create special relationships with Europe by cooperating in EU and NATO structures, participating in as many programs as possible. But most importantly, they hope to acquire a specialty which would allow them to be perceived as "young European brothers". As a precedent, the Baltics are usually invoked.

Even in Soviet times the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) were distinguishable from the rest of the Soviet constituent republics. Something made them eligible for being considered prospectively part of Europe as soon as the decline of the Soviet system became visible, and for being detached from Russia and CIS by a "real border" as soon as the empire collapsed. The Baltics were always special in the USSR, not only for their geostrategic location on the map, but by their European mentality and lifestyle and their cultural distance from the empire. Their late (pre-World War II)

incorporation into the USSR fails to give an adequate explanation; the greater part of Western Ukraine was incorporated in the USSR in the same period as the Baltics yet would never rank with them.

The South Caucasus states have been trying to satisfy their immediate security needs by appeasing Russia's own strategic interest in maintaining a tolerable military presence in the region. Not yet able to secure their borders and settle internal disputes, Georgia and Azerbaijan envision their long-term security guaranteed in treaty-based Western protection and a "real border" with their big northern neighbor, while Armenia (with no common border with Russia) would perceive the same as a security risk. Armenians, although no less determined to ensure their independent statehood, are trying to maintain it through strategic partnership with Russia, even at the risk of alienation from the rest of the Caucasus.

Thus, the more realistic thinkers in the South Caucasus visualize their sinuous way into the West via Balticness via Eastern-Europeanness via Central-Europeanness. What they fail to realize is a rigidity of the Western perception of CIS nations as descendents of a totalitarian spirit. Bulgaria or Romania may not evince more "Europeanness" than the Caucasus, in this sense, yet in their favor is the psychologically important fact that they have never been part of the Soviet empire (though Ceaucescu's regime was no less destructive to the spirit), and the geostrategically important fact that they are closer to the European Union on the map. These states, therefore, do not need an interim "green light" of Balticness which may be a harder thing to achieve for the Caucasus peoples than liberation from Soviet rule.

Will "legal alien" status become permanent for the Europe-seeking newly independent states? On the one hand, there is increasing international interest in the Caucasus related to the prospect of Caspian oil transportation to the West, the "Eurasian corridor", "the Great Silk Road", and so on. On the other hand, the prospect of incorporating the Central, Eastern European, and Baltic states into NATO may bring nearer the time when the East-West security border dividing Russian and Western spheres of influence will co-

incide with present CIS borders. And this may very well deepen the gap between East and West that the whole post-Communist global transformation was expected to bridge.

1998

This is the first in the series of collections of works by a team of Georgian scholars involved in the Conflict Resolution Training Program by ICCN, implemented by the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN). This collection includes a series of philosophical essays and reviews to promote research and studies.

# 1998

UNDERSTANDING  
CONFLICT

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation. Understanding Conflict, Published by ICCN, Tbilisi, Georgia, 1998.

## ON REFUSING TO UNDERSTAND

*"The usual pattern seems to be that people give non-violence two weeks to solve their problem... and then decide it has "failed". Then they go on with violence for the next hundred years...*

*and it seems never to "fail" and be rejected".*

**Theodore Roszak**

Conflict is a major paradigm for all fields of contemporary social studies. It is a topic whose citation index is among the highest. It is also mass media's daily bread and a persisting headache for politicians and diplomats. Its definition is a challenge for academics. Its incarnation is often a tragedy comparable to black plague for millions of people worldwide. One will hardly succeed trying to explain them the theories that a "constructive violence" also exists, and that every war eventually accelerates progress. Yet, like it or not, conflict belongs to the few issues that "make the world go round". In our age it also makes the news of the day. "Conflict is a growth industry", assure us conflict experts.

The art and science of conflict resolution has already generated the amount of literature comparable to religious. Various handbooks teach us how to avoid, forecast, deescalate, settle, transform, use, or just live in peace with conflicts. Most people would like to develop these skills, but real-life situations, unlike those in the books, are usually elusive and subjectively disguised, and the tips often disagree. One way to overcome this Babel was sought in creating a comprehensive and well substantiated conflict theory.

What is normally meant by conflict theory in scientific writings, is either its partly or fully formalized version, or even an abstract mathematical theory often derived from, or based on John von Neumann's theory of games, to a limited extent applicable to significant fields of social life, or would rather represent a summarized account of various conceptions pertaining to major types of conflict. Fully comprehensive conflict theory is hardly expectable to emerge, but the already discovered regularities should make for more precise and unified definitions, and more adequate interpretation and use of terms. Still, neither of the existing theories has managed to sufficiently clarify the basic issues that brought them to life, to the extent of making them applicable to people's lives and decision-making.

It is very easy to theoretically imagine the conflict situations relevant to non-zero-sum games where "win/win" or "lose/lose" outcomes are possible, but it is extremely hard to upgrade your living to this elementary truth. Why does it happen that judgments and generalizations jeopardize conversation, interpretations enforce "black/white" (binary) thinking, lack of communication creates "enemy", and simple otherness grows into intolerance? Do "true" and "false" pictures of conflict really exist, or can their antagonism be overcome? It turns out that these (already) traditional issues of conflict studies are closely linked with the problems of systems analysis, philosophical logic, political psychology, and other fields of modern academic research. Many of the frequently used terms do not necessarily have to be used on the intuitive basis, as they already have clarified and precise meanings in the relevant fields of theoretical knowledge. Yet there are many others that have to be



used in all of their obscurity, or to be proven as empty signifiers. “Tender is the night”, and “life is just a walking shadow”, but we “poor players” have to make it signify something.

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Conflict studies are remarkable in comprising both practical and theoretical aspects of the problem. The most reasonable way appears not in seeking a universal formalized version of conflict theory, but in raising the already conceptualized empirical/intuitive knowledge on conflict and related problems to the methodological level of thought, relevantly and correctly engraving theoretical elements, whenever required, into the evolving generalized conception. On the other hand, the already accumulated and conceptualized knowledge on conflict, violence, intolerance, and their perception in human society can significantly upgrade our basic views of human nature, thinking, perception, and communication process.

Another distinctive feature of conflict studies is in their indispensable human dimension. Conflict situations have been studied at interpersonal, intergroup, interorganizational and international levels, the latter being understood as interstate level (including most wars and violent conflicts that took place before 1990s). The former two appeared interesting mostly to social psychologists, the third to organizational behaviorists/developmentalists, and the fourth to political scientists. It so happened that the type of conflict that was going to become an all-time front-page news and a globally pressing issue since 1980s, had altogether slipped the conflict researchers' attention. These were (inter)ethnic conflicts, often intertwined with other, no less complicated types. This largely happened because of the ideologies of both global political poles which had determined centrality of issues for the bipolar world, and saw the issue of ethnicity in the world processes as dying off and finally doomed. No one could envisage the nationalist boom in the later years, as well as the coming politicization of interethnic intolerance. In view of the sudden and catastrophic collapse of the Soviet empire, it was too easy

to start to believe in “the end of history” or the coming “clash of civilizations”. Hopefully, the world is now retrieving from the shock caused by the crush of empires, and a somewhat less apocalyptic vision of remaining and emerging disputes is expectable.

Ethnically and/or religiously induced violent conflicts are frequently understood as outbursts of irrational character. Lacking the power of explanation, such an approach in itself creates a conceptual barrier both to conflict resolution and conflict prevention. As the problem is always practical and painful, the approaches to it, whether rationalized or not, should lead to an implementable solution. Another problem is how to transcend incompatibility of the pictures of conflict on different sides. Again, the easiest but not best way would be to state an impossibility of a unified objective picture of a conflict, which would subjectively justify each of the parties, and maybe even invite them to further escalate the existing intolerance.

Considering all the crises that people have to live through, investigate, instigate or overcome, it becomes obvious that people in most cases cannot really prevent or avoid ethnically induced conflict situations, and the crucial problem is how quickly and efficiently they can get out of them with minimized harm. What makes a fundamental importance in practical applications of any conflict theory is not what a conflict situation (at any stage of its development) is, but what the actors think it is, i.e. the problem of conflict understanding largely depends on the problem of conflict perception. Awareness of a common problem, which in most cases precedes progress in negotiations, does not erode rigidity of the pictures of conflict existing for the actors. One way to deal with this problem is through issue, actor, game rule, or (synergizing) structural transformation of conflict, in the course of public peace process or intervention in “natural” developments. However, Des Cartes’s “*Cogito ergo sum*” might be a universal motto for resolvers of the intolerance-breeding conflict, this gravest challenge to homo sapiens.

## TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE INTERPRETATION OF CONFLICT

*"If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite".*

*William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

## FROM KOAN TO METAOBJECT

One of the twentieth century's most brilliant minds, a Nobel Prize winner in physics Dr. Niels Bohr has solved the wave/particle dilemma in the physics of micro-world by introducing his mind-illuminating complementarity principle, a universal methodological tool for reconciling seemingly incompatible pictures of reality. Suddenly, it was clear that what looked like mutually exclusive and/or incompatible pictures of an object, could be more adequately seen as the complementary pictures of a metaobject. This breakthrough became possible thanks to Dr. Bohr's ability to transcend the conventional limits of a scientific world outlook. Similar processes earlier in the century helped overcome crises in foundations of mathematics and logic (cf. the Godel's Theorem and metamathematics). They have revealed important aspects of regularities in overcoming major crises of human thinking and understanding, indispensable also while dealing with violent social conflicts, especially those with the issue of ethnicity involved. It turns out we cannot solve any major ethnic, social, or religious conflict without altogether changing, transforming our world outlook, seeing the world from a new perspective, where the problem is rather transcended than decided.

Zen has been one classical way to prevent and totally eliminate conflict mentality by fostering an inclusive, flexible, open and non-violent worldview. An adept unwittingly transformed his mind while trying to solve a koan, a seemingly meaningless or self-contradictory statement (yet sponsored as significant by the master), and could be even corporally punished for "wrong solutions". The "right solution", however, never came, as solving koan had never been a goal in itself, but represented a problem no more for an enlightened and transformed mind. In this whole process one thing had to be

a priori given, and could not be imposed from the outside: it was the commitment of an adept to the process of opening his own mind. A modern conflicting man is rather committed to close his mind from any revelations, and the European-styled rationality, in its turn, often fosters and breeds mind-closures, the same ones which it later tries to unclose.

How do we learn about a social conflict? We read in a newspaper or a magazine, or watch TV, or just hear someone say that something is happening somewhere. From the very start we learn a biased picture which we tend to believe or not, depending on our own sentiment and credibility of the source. Later we learn about the existence of other pictures of the same conflict, and its perceived complexity grows. The worst, of course, comes if we are (discover ourselves or become) part of the conflict, especially if painful issues of ethnic or religious identity are involved. A methodological model can be offered to rationalize a koan-styled interpretation of conflict – a painful and incomprehensible obstacle you have to transcend on your way to development, even without really understanding how it works, to conflict as metaobject: a kind of reality characterized by higher degree of organization that enables to comprehend an intrinsic moment of incompatibility through a not-fully-rationalized yet adequate tool integrating all its visions and perspectives into one.

1998

### **YOU BETTER FREE YOUR MIND INSTEAD...**

Two thousand years ago Patanjali wrote in his Yoga Aphorisms, “Yoga is restraining the mind-staff (Chitta) from taking various forms (Vrittis)” (According to Swami Vivekananda, *Raja-Yoga, or Conquering the Internal Nature*, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982, p. 115). Something blasphemous to a European thought, until Ludwig Wittgenstein in mid-twentieth century came to the same paradoxical conclusion: you need to stop thinking in order to understand. Apparently, here is something in intrinsic mechanisms of our mind that prevents us from getting to truth, kind of Heisenberg’s uncertainty

principle in action. The classic way to avoid/overcome this obstacle was to achieve completeness of a picture: wholeness seemed a guarantee against misunderstanding.

“Holy”, “whole” and “healthy” are three words of the same origin. Soul is immortal as it is whole, and “none has the power to destroy the unchangeable”<sup>1</sup>. Much later, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Immanuel Kant’s agnosticism will prove that the thought/perceived/imagined picture of the world never comes close to the supposed destination of gnosis. Cumulative knowledge seems all that can be expected from the evolution of scientific thought. “Dissolution pertains to all that is of compound nature. Elaborate thoroughly your own liberation”, said reportedly Gautama Buddha to his disciples gathered at his deathbed. Global vision of the essence of things in their perennial and universal oneness should not need mediation of a rational mind. Can pragmatism of social healing tolerate questions that found no rational answers in millennia? Human mind, its nature and basic laws of functioning are still among greatest mysteries: we actually perceive Nature by means of something whose nature remains obscure to us. This paradoxical situation has historically created variety of approaches and chains of misconceptions including the opposition of mysticism and naturalism in understanding our own selves.

It can clearly be shown that thinking is an un-isotropic process: we are conditioned by some forces to think along enigmatic structural guidelines, so that our scope is inevitably restricted, and we finally are within unending yet closed universe (Einstein’s cosmological model of the universe may serve as a good illustration here). Rational thought just cannot be unstructured, and a “closed-circuit” mindset is a natural outcome (our minds should feel like Leibniz’s monads, the elementary substances which “have no windows but reflect the whole universe”). Strange though it may sound, mind-closures are reenforced in refined forms of intellect: educated modernity is even more prone to eventually block

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<sup>1</sup> Srimad Bhagavad Gita, 2.17.

out in domineering, self-sufficient and all-explaining world outlook than primitive types of intellect had been. This vicious circle can be shattered by unexplained phenomena, undecidable questions and intercultural conflicts, and can only be transcended and overcome in the course of global-structural transformation of mind.

The evolutionary approach shows that no reflections on human thought can result in revealing an underlying rigid and unchangeable structural basis, but that the object of reflection is rather determined by a certain system of predispositions, consolidated by a regularized practice of generations. It is not only a set of schemata to which we tend to relate and adjust the empirical data, but which also make us prefer to perceive only the data that fits into them. Ontogenetically we see that a child's flexible and receptive mind is capable of miraculous transformations, which become less and less feasible as (s)he gets aged and educated. We accumulate knowledge, but truly, the farther one travels, the less one knows: otherwise, pre-technological Oriental wisdom would be useless in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is obviously not the case.

1998

### TO THINK OR TO UNDERSTAND? THE DILEMMA OF A RATIONAL MIND

*"Is there anything in common between the Bosnian crisis and metamathematics? The common point is that you cannot overcome a major crisis without transforming your mind" (G.K.).*

Colin Cherry in his classic "On Human Communication" was concerned about such fundamental issues as why it happens that any community splits into warring camps or rivaling teams, like capital and labor, two parties to a violent conflict, two political parties in some democratic countries, or orthodox and heretics in one and the same country. Colin Cherry shows how a choice of predefined distinctive features creates the language quanta for various sets of descriptions used in communication process. Let us say a man **A**

knows a man **C** but a man **B** does not know **C**, and **A** has to describe **C** to **B** using only three parameters, like “height”, “weight” and “age”, and only within the opposite states, like “tall” or “low” of the height. Under these conditions it is possible to create exactly eight different descriptions of **C**, where the meaning of each is predetermined by the agreement on the initial parameters (Colin Cherry describes them as “generalized axes of coordinates”), along which the discourse may be extended, and to which it also has to be limited.

This might serve as a simple example of how ‘the common space’ is structured between communicants. Unlike the virtual poor creature **C** though, who would have to accept the description portraying him like <tall, heavy, old>, to which terms **B**’s perceptive abilities have been limited by definition, we real creatures utilize in the natural process of thinking and communicating such an indefinitely broad variety of parameters that its power, as well as the power of our intellect, seems to us infinitely rich and inexhaustible. Yet, the first thing we notice about this variety is that every single distinctive feature cannot be used or combined with any other (which is reflected in the structure of our language), thus opening up a structural realm of thought and communication. The other thing we notice is that what is compatible, or just comparable for us, is inadmissible or even unimaginable for others, and vice versa.

It had been known at least since Zeno’s paradoxes (4<sup>th</sup> century before Christian Era) that binary opposition and dichotomic splitting are important tools, at the same time perpetuating and limiting human thinking and understanding. On the other hand, a structural/descriptive analysis (even in simplest cases like Cherry’s example) becomes possible thanks to our ability to somehow feel which of the parameters (features) can be considered together, or applied to one and the same class of objects. Compatibility intuition, present in all natural languages, would turn unrationalizable for humans, as it remains for computers, without a deeply-rooted structural hierarchy existing behind the analyzable process of thought. Socialization, rationalization, conceptualization and standardization of the system

of attitudes, judgements and preferences in our mind enhances its structural stability (in evolutionary terms, survivability); yet, this is also what eventually makes it rigid, inflexible and structurally catastrophic. Systems of intersubjective “gravity centers” in our mental process create, so to say, the skeleton of human thinking and understanding.

A multitude of all possible combinations of all thinkable features/parameters that may be considered in relation to thinking mind, is how close we intuitively get to the idea of thought-space. This may be seen as an idea of an universal class of all dimensions of thought. The elements of this space are organized in a very complex and largely unexplored way, but in all cases they create a realm that is limited by its structure. Major structures of thought can be pictured as arranged in a hierarchy of layers, each of which pertains to a certain age in its development. Those cannot be seen all together, like in a cross-section of a tree stem, but can be gleaned from documents of the age, and are manifest in living bearers of various cultures and civilizations. Every epoch creates a specific set of modes of thinking by which the epoch is largely recognizable. Genesis of the structure of thought can only be traced to simpler formations that had determined extensively and intensively the entire diversity of relatively primitive “worlds”, but not to the entire reconstructed chain of such.

The reader will probably be reminded here of Thomas Kuhn’s very schematic model for the structure of scientific revolutions with periods of “normal science” determined by “paradygms” in between. History and methodology of science, however, have so far to a very limited extent managed to reveal the nature of links and driving forces of major transformations in mind. However, in the power-engine of mind’s structural development, conflict, as history of dialectics from Heraclitus through Hegel shows, should undoubtedly have played a major part. Suffice it to mention the three great crises in foundations of mathematics caused by (i) Zeno’s paradoxes and the Pythagoreans’ discoveries of incommensurability of the diagonal and the side in the square, (ii) the intrinsic inconsistency



of “the infinitely small” in Newton-Leibniz’s differential and integral calculi, and (iii) the logical antinomies emerged in Cantor’s set theory at the dawn of the twentieth century. In theoretical physics, the “strange” behavior of micro-particles, inexplicable and contradictory in classical terms, gave rise to modern quantum physics, which has not yet, however, fully outgrown the crisis. In a more practical sphere of politics, a confrontational cold-war mentality of a bipolar world gave an impetus to revolutionary global transformation. Gorbachev and Shevardnadze started in 1980s to speak about a “new political thinking” that should have replaced that mentality in international relations, but they failed to convert the post-totalitarian mentality of collapsing Soviet society before it actually disintegrated into frustrated, antagonistic, and conflicting groups.

Getting back to the structure of mind, the universal organizing principle on the space of dimensions is, unsurprisingly, the tolerance relationship (having its extensional model in Zeeman’s reflexive and symmetrical binary relation). Tolerance is a minimum requirement for any two objects to interact, or just coexist without being damaged or transformed, which should not necessarily include subjectivity in understanding this term, or interpreting it in the emotional language of human relationships. General idea of tolerance is closer to that of compatibility, which creates a binary opposition with incompatibility, in its turn closer to antagonism. Tolerance is the least value that can on one scale develop up to identity, and on another up to empathy.

### **SPIELRAUM, OR WHAT IS TABOO TO IMAGINE ABOUT A CONFLICT**

Social conflict, at least at the initial stages, can be compared to a collision of two trains, neither of which would bother to honk because it is the other train that should disappear before long, for it cannot be real. Group ethnocentrism is usually blamed for distorted perceptions of the parties, but it cannot satisfactorily explain their rigidity. The crucial moment in the socio-cultural world out-

looks underlying the expressed positions of the conflicting parties is their consistency, completeness, and self-sufficiency. The kind of consistency in question (similar to pseudoconsistency of the constructions of a paranoid mind) is achieved by purposefully, though not quite consciously limiting perception and filtering information, to maintain the existing issue rigidity and justify preferences made. Completeness and self-sufficiency in the resulting picture of the universe is easily achieved (or, at least, believed in), along with a feeling of "righteousness" which supposedly exalteth a nation, while any different-mindedness is equally righteously demonized.

As a result, a self-justifying mechanism of intolerance is created by the conflict, insurmountable without deep structural and mental transformations in all parties involved. Remarkably, a breakthrough in the public peace process is often made after intolerance is transcended in the party characterized by higher degree/intensity of intolerance. So far, this process is often seen as basically unmanageable, and irrational to the point of being mystified.

These and similar regularities in conflict development indicate that a basic mindset responsible for them can be described as exclusive interpretation, pertinent not only to conflict but also to many other perceived/reflected phenomena and mental constructions. Violent/highintensity conflicts radicalize perception and foster binary splits in mentality. Yet, at least at a theoretical level of thinking, it is clear that interpretation of conflict situation is not bound to be exclusive. There is a fifteen-stone garden in Japan, but from whatever point you view it, you see only fourteen stones. What is seen from different angles, is not necessarily two different things (unless you accept a purely phenomenological outlook), and you start to understand only after you realize your perception is bound to be incomplete.

An idea of complete meaning of conflict may be instrumental here: a class of all (quasi-)implications from all possible interpretations of a conflict situation. According to the logic of conflict, meaning is always incomplete because of incompatibilities between implications/ interpretations. In these terms, conflict can be defined

as a synergic manifestation of incompleteness of factors influencing the dynamic process of social interaction at any given stage (which really means that the process of understanding is potentially infinite). While what is usually called “conflict” is a temporal cross-section pertaining to high-intensity points in this process. The universe of a given conflict, or *Spielraum*, is related to the conflict situation as perceived by the parties (despite all incompatibilities, parties to conflict have a common *Spielraum*!). What is beyond *Spielraum*, is an indiscriminate realm of what is forbidden to imagine about a conflict, further limited, rationalized and structured as knowledge accumulates. The farther we go in this process, the less we understand; so what is the alternative?

Social reality does not fit into a theoretical cage the mind prepares for it. *Spielraum* may be understood in structural terms as a subspace of “legitimate” dimensions of thinking/reflecting/understanding, or as a variety of all acceptable rules of game within a given metagame framework. Conflict mentality keeps outside *Spielraum* all interpretations, explanations, and predictions which contradict the conclusions and judgements made in *Spielraum* and/or which jeopardize the validity of its structure, thus denying them the right of existence. Tolerant mentality, on the contrary, tries to transform/expand *Spielraum*, ideally to coincide with a given thought-space, so as to comprise as wide variety of phenomena as possible. And for an opened/enlightened mind the problem of acceptance/authorization does not exist at all.

### **ON CULTURAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUNDS OF CONFLICT MENTALITY**

Apart from purely methodo(logical) problems arising in the course of conflict analysis, mediation or negotiation, there are problems created by cultural differences stemming from ethnic/cultural identities of the parties to conflict, as well as of the “third party”. Voices could be heard about relevance/adaptability of Western-bred conflict mediation/resolution techniques to the “third world”. For

an example, in October 1993 an interesting article appeared in *Negotiation Journal* written by Dr. Paul E. Salem, professor of political science at the American University of Beirut.

Dr. P. Salem, apparently knowledgeable in nuances of both Western and Eastern mentality and relationships, very efficiently raised the question of relevance of Western conflicts resolution, mediation, facilitation and oilier techniques to the non-Western societies. Westerners found their approaches and negotiation techniques on a more or less stable and secure system they live in, which they accept and wish to maintain. They automatically assume the fundamental principles underlying the same approaches and techniques should be valid everywhere, and the latter may be applied successfully in the rest of the world. Indeed, how can anyone doubt that peace is better than war, suffering should be stopped, warring parties separated, and only peaceful solution sought? While in other communities it seems equally right to interpret what is happening in terms of fighting evil, punishing enemy, forceably restoring historical justice, demanding withdrawal of peace-keeping forces and seeking military solution to the problem. Much of what a Westerner may consider as self-evident, is not such for a post-Soviet or Middle-Easterner. Furthermore, just to what extent Westerners follow in their everyday lives what they are aware of theoretically? Dr. Salem's idea is not to abandon the Western approach entirely, but to keep in mind the mental/cultural/psychological differences while implementing a negotiating methodology.

The very basic problems started to reveal themselves as soon as the Western-bred institutes of mediation and facilitation were introduced to the post-Soviet dispute resolution. It soon became clear that each of the parties to conflict usually sees mediator as someone to be persuaded in rightness of their stand and, this task being successfully achieved, to be used as a kind of "agent of influence", or otherwise dismiss him/her on the basis of incompetence. Mediator's traditional approach is, the "pictures" taken as given, to base his/her negotiative tactics on extending his/her mind to comprehend the inner logic of each of them. If (s)he deals with a conflict

that has achieved a certain level of gravity and/or intensity, these inner logics must have incompatible moments, insuperable within at least one party's structure of thinking. Mediator, arbitrator, resolver, whoever in between the parties can never afford offering his/her analysis, or assessing positions, or revealing hidden preferences in them without being exposed to severe criticism from at least one of the parties, which would jeopardize or even discard the mediator's credentials with them (this situation is reminiscent of Eric Berne's transactional analysis where any "intruder", even a psychotherapist himself, who attempts to reveal the nature of a game in a group meets a fierce protesting reaction from the game initiator).

### **WHY SHOULD "WE" TALK TO "THEM"? IDENTIFYING AN UNCOMFORTABLE PARTY**

Post-Soviet communities in conflict develop their awareness of conflict situation by stages. At every next stage they have to painfully acknowledge counter-productiveness of the steps taken at earlier stages. Can we imagine full awareness achieved at an early stage, which would help prevent the conflict from escalating and getting a violent form? This is often a problem even for a developed democratic civil society which appears to have the tools to cope with it. Remarkably, the same is hardly possible in emerging democracies where immature mass consciousness prevails over advanced individuals' vision, and is more feasible in authoritarian systems where public sentiment is restrained by a ruling group's policy.

In a sufficiently intensive social conflict each of the parties would be happy to solve the problem without negotiations entirely: the truth is on our side, God is with us, so let the other party realize their faults and accept the offered terms of agreement. Soon it is clear that the other side feels exactly the same way, and is determined and able to endure the confrontation. So negotiations are inevitable; yet it is good to have a strong mediator on your side, hard bargaining seems a bottom-line tactics, and any compromise looks like a betrayal of your own cause and people who have suf-

ferred for that cause. There is a major temptation to attribute till the failures and obstacles to a covert support of “the other party” from the third force (which may partly be true, but is usually globalized; apparently it looks like a shifted locus of control). Perception of the conflict situation as a “zero-sum game” persists in the parties for a long time, and compromised agreements are thus perceived as imposed from hostile “third” power(s) rather than elaborated as a rational choice.

Similarly, in a sufficiently intensive social conflict each of the parties would be happy to call the other party the name it feels the other deserves. Soon it is clear that under that name there will be no negotiations. In the meanwhile, mediating parties and international environment have already pragmatically started to use for all parties to conflict the names they chose for themselves. Outsiders are, of course, suspected of being partial, to say the least, and the dispute starts in the community on whether to temporarily accept, at least operationally, the denotation of the other party proposed by itself (which most probably involves the sought status), in order not to ruin negotiating process. Negotiations proper, as well as all relevant diplomatic transactions develop in a very different way from their media coverage and comments on both sides which try to maintain the radicalized state of public opinion.

### **EQUALIZING POSITIONS IN RIGHTS WHILE NEGOTIATING A SOLUTION**

Traditional approach had been based on trying to pick, or point out the only true, or “right” description of the conflict situation. For an interested party, it is often a painful discovery that none of the alternative pictures of the same conflict (expressed in the essential positions of the parties) should need the right of existence, as they already exist. What is more difficult to believe is that each of the pictures is, in its own way, true. In an interpersonal, or even an intergroup conflict we can hardly exclude the probability of one, or all pictures of the conflict to be erroneous, based on false premis-

es, mistaken perceptions or calculations, and thus correctable. In a social, ethnic or international conflict each picture/position is substantiated to the extent that it becomes part of the identity of any individual in the conflicting party, and any mediator which ignores or disregards validity of one picture to the other's favor, is doomed as a professional.

In all cases, a conflict situation primarily assumes the form of a more or less consistent description of events. Expressed positions of the parties to conflict, along with the pertinent historical pictures, make basic scripts, and the "third party" understanding of events should create a metascript, as it reflects over the principles underlying the basic scripts. Various versions of history of conflict, combined with scenarios of its development, make possible scripts. Attitudes, value systems and preferences of the social environment in which the conflict develops, induce the (possible) contexts in which the scripts may be considered.

First of all, we have to get rid of the incompatibility which is inevitably present: otherwise, we are not dealing with real conflict but rather with misunderstanding in terms. The methodological principle of equality of rights for the conflict pictures/positions does not mean that one picture/position cannot be more substantiated or justified than the other. It only means that a negotiation and mediation process based on a preference between the positions of the parties in an inter-communal or interethnic conflict cannot succeed in principle. We of course stumble at an old philosophical dilemma: how can there exist two different or even mutually exclusive yet true pictures of the same phenomenon or situation? Whatever epistemologically may the answer be, any successful (mediated or self-cured) negotiating process should incorporate the following stages: (a) acceptance of the positions and identification of the parties to conflict as they are (no criticism or corrections!); (b) comparative analysis of the positions of the parties to conflict, picking out and discriminating their compatible and incompatible points; (c) transformation of the existing conflict mentality into an inclusive and reconciled vision; (d) upgrading of the conflict pictures generated

by the parties to a unified meta-picture, dwelling on compatible or joint interests, values, problems, goals, and finally transcending incompatibility.

### INSTEAD OF EPILOGUE

*“Truth is lived, not taught. Be prepared for conflicts...”*  
*Hermann Hesse, Das Glasperlenspiel*

If I try to characterize in one word the goal of this essay, it is more religious than theoretical. And if so, why do we have to pass through all these stages at all? Why cannot people start from what has already been discovered as the final truth, and avoid painful discoveries often costing them their lifetime, and sometimes, their lives? The answer is obvious: because that is how we are, that is the path we have to go through, some rapidly, some slowly and painfully, and some never. The path to enlightenment does exist, and tolerance is just an interim state on the way to it. That is exactly why we need to develop techniques to make this transition available for all while we are still active.

The danger exists though that the issues raised in this article may look even more complicated now, instead of being clarified. Yet, let us not forget that the solution is in ourselves, or better, in our souls. The Western thought has always been oriented toward cumulative knowledge of the external reality, the inner world being a secondary issue needed primarily for clearing up the subject/object and stimulus/reaction relationships. The Eastern thought was primarily concentrated on the essential unity of being, of which man’s external and internal worlds were secondary and/or complementary sides. A sufficient basis for understanding may be created only in combination of these approaches, enabling us to come back to our common loving home: a peaceful world.



Separatism is understood in conflict studies as a phenomenon of essentially political nature, salient in periods of global transition/transformation, like post-Communism, etc., and is negatively assessed as a conflict-escalating strategy in inter-communal relations. Theoretical studies of separatism may be generalized to the point where the discourse is free of likes and dislikes while revealing the nature of some predicaments usually attributed to the phenomenon in question. Again history of the scientific thought gives ample evidence of how everything is intertwined in social and individual, theoretical and practical consciousness, in formal and intuitive, analytical and metaphysical outlook.

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, 18 June, 1998.

## UNDERSTANDING SEPARATISM, OR THE PARADOX OF PART AND WHOLE REVISITED

Separatism is understood in conflict studies as a phenomenon of essentially political nature, salient in periods of global transition/transformation, like post-Communism, etc., and is negatively assessed as a conflict-escalating strategy in inter-communal relations. Theoretical studies of separatism may be generalized to the point where the discourse is free of likes and dislikes while revealing the nature of some predicaments usually attributed to the phenomenon in question. Again history of the scientific thought gives ample evidence of how everything is intertwined in social and individual, theoretical and practical consciousness, in formal and intuitive, analytical and metaphysical outlook.

A minority that was considered to be happy to constitute an integral part of the nation, or a community within a larger community, suddenly decides to apply for independence and, if necessary, fight for it. The more the larger community tries to persuade the minority to give up their struggle against and reunite with “their own brothers and sisters”, the deeper the minority believes they

have been under oppression and should seek independence from their supposed “elder brothers”, but no real relatives at all. The situation may remind “growing pains” of an individual in a family, or a species outgrowing a parental species. In a social version we deal with a multitude part/whole relationship where, as a rule, the part in question has to sort out its relationships with other overlapping parts (e.g. to prove its rights on the disputed territory in an ethno-territorial dispute). Historians on both sides depict mutually incompatible pictures of the past, while negotiators and mediators have to overcome the reluctance of the parties to denote those at the opposite side of the table: calling them what they call themselves would mean encouraging them in the sought status, and calling them what you would prefer to call them would ruin the negotiation. Peace process appears at a stalemate, yet the internal dynamics are on their way: the more a status-seeking party is denied it legally, the more it de facto affirms in it. Parties, as a rule, prefer someone else to talk for them to their opponents. The usual tactics (an ideally sought *ultimo ratio regnum*) is to appeal to international organizations and “the world community” to let them finally cut a Gordian knot and, hopefully, assume responsibility for what might follow. Familiar situation, is it not? At least, it is a pattern according to which more than half of all modern internal conflicts have developed.

If you really want to resolve the conflict, you have to abandon the attitudes based on a hierarchical structure of opponents. In philosophical foundations of classic science, Galileo was reportedly the first to make a paradoxical statement: part may be equal to the whole. This statement is pertinent to the infinite objects though: if a one-one correspondence may be established between elements of the whole and of its proper part, these are considered equivalent. May we borrow this picture to consider social conflict relationships. “Part” rebelling against the “whole” it belongs to, tries to determine itself first as separate from the “whole” (“I emerge and exist”), and then as a recognized subject in preferred spheres of relationships. The primary motivation is basically combined, in various propor-

tions, of the needs for security and the self-realization of identity. Here, like everywhere else, it soon becomes clear that all subjects are equal, but some subjects are more important than others.

Self-determination of the “part” in question takes, with varying effect, several stages, from negative/reactive to positive/proactive, and largely depends on viability of the “whole” (consider the difference in part-whole disputes prior to, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union). From the initial stages of dispute, the demand of equal partnership is a test case for seriousness of intention within the negotiating process. Putting forward its global claims for a full self-sustainability and self-sufficiency, the “part” seeks primarily acknowledgement from its previous “parent/master” in its already changed modus, before anything beyond it may rationalize. In this, as in any other social dispute, all parties involved should realise the process is irreversible. Claims of the “part” should indicate to the “whole” that (a) something is wrong essentially and/or structurally with the “whole”, (b) the claims of the “part”, whether acceptable or not, should be addressed with respect, and that (c) the conflict cannot end in restoring the status quo, but in res on an essentially different basis. The part may as well reduce its claims if the whole efficiently demonstrates understanding of the prestige and security concerns of the part. If this is not achieved, the final act of self-determination will also depend on the viability of the former “part”: it may grow into a separate viable “whole”, or, if it turns out it had unrealistically assessed its potential, it may join (another or the same) whole, or altogether dissolve as an entity.



By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International center on Conflict and Negotiation. Journal GEORGICA, The Netherlands, #4, June, 1999.

*"The common point in all major crises is that you cannot overcome them without transforming your mind".*  
George Khutsishvili

## ACTUAL SITUATION OF GEORGIA IN 1998

The internal social situation of Georgia has been increasingly quiet in recent years and Georgia is steadily moving towards incorporation in European structures and programs.

The worldwide growing interest in the Caucasus and the idea of a "Eurasian Corridor" seem to have started a process of coordination and cooperation between the Caucasian states that could lead to stability in the region.

The former Soviet Republic of Georgia has been through several major crises since the collapse of the Soviet Union, including a civil war in late 1991, and the Georgian-Abkhaz war in 1992-93, followed by a mass exodus of ethnic Georgians from Abkhazia, and a period of slow recovery which lasts to the present day. The country's poverty and unsolved internal ethnopolitical disputes with breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain the main internal

source of unrest. The Abkhazia case is marked with a higher level of internal consolidation in favor of independence or creation of a symmetrical “(con)federation union” with the Georgian state where the right of secession (in Abkhaz view vs Georgian expectations) should be envisaged. The core problem undermining negotiations is the 250,000 IDPs or “internally displaced persons”, almost all of them ethnic Georgians, who demand to return home.

Ethnic Abkhaz constituted 18% of the population (less than 2% of entire Georgia) in pre-war Abkhazia (until 1992), which can be regarded as a serious security risk factor for the Abkhaz, especially in transition times. Forcing the Georgian majority out of Abkhazia enabled the Abkhaz to ensure their demographic majority in their land. The communication and confidence degree between the sides is extremely low. Violent clashes in the bordering Gali region of Abkhazia in late May 1998, which ended in the second wave of ethnic Georgian refugees from Abkhazia, dispersed a fragile hope for peaceful settlement in the near future.

Four and a half years (the war ended September 27 of 1993) passed since IDPs have been “temporarily” settled in large hotels, dormitories and rest houses of Georgia. Sociological polls showed a remarkably low level of aggression in IDPs; yet, as negotiations continue to be on a hold, and no solution is visible for the problem of their returning home, frustration grows, and is likely to breed a higher level of aggression in masses of IDPs. The “war party” in Georgia appeals to the military solution of the problem of refugees by forcibly returning Abkhazia back under Georgia’s jurisdiction. The prospect of war that would inevitably ensue, appals many.

The South Ossetia case is different in that communication, including human interaction and trade, has been active, and reconciliation under the aegis of the Georgian federal state is not a problem for the majority of South Ossets, but the solution is hindered by difficulties in naming the region once the status of autonomy is agreed upon. The Ossets insist on “South Ossetia Republic” while Georgians would consider the same name as an invitation for Ossets

to enforce reunification with their brothers in North Ossetia across the Russian border.

There are zones of social (and latently, ethnic) tension such as the Javakheti region in southwestern Georgia densely populated by Armenians, and bordering Armenia and Turkey. A large group (c. 300,000) of Meskhetians (often incorrectly called Meskhetian Turks) deported during World War II from Javakheti to various parts of the Soviet Union, is waiting to return to their homeland. A subgroup (around 40,000 persons) of Meskhetians claim their ethnic Georgian origin and demand they receive Georgian citizenship in the first place. About 200 families already have a permit to settle in Tbilisi and other places. Yet the Armenians in Javakheti (they call this region Javakhk) are appalled by the prospect of strengthening the Turkish element in the region. Georgia's leadership realizes that mass repatriation of Meskhetians to Javakheti would destabilize the situation in the explosive region, and procrastinates the problem in all possible ways. Yet international organizations' pressure, caused also by demands of other CIS countries to relieve their problem with Meskhetians, is growing towards enforcing the Georgian authorities' decision.

Federalism and multiculturalism seem to western experts to be natural remedies to tackle the Georgian internal disputes. The Georgian Constitution leaves the question of administrative-territorial structure of the country open "until the resolution of ethno-territorial conflicts and the restoration of the territorial integrity of the country". The prevailing public opinion in Georgia is that federalism weakens a country by decentralizing the center and delegating power to local authorities, that it invites subregions, minorities, etc. to fight for increasing autonomization and/or secession. In short, federalism is perceived as a threat. The only exclusion to this rule is made for the Abkhaz who are an indigenous ethnic group in Georgia, and are unlikely to accept anything short of symmetrical federative union with the Georgians.

Problems caused by the internal disputes intertwine with the general transitional issues common for all NIS (newly independent

states). The general public in Georgia was unprepared to accept either the values of civil society, or capable of expressing themselves adequately. Using “nation” in the sense of “people”, or “all citizens of the country” means equalizing ethnic Georgians and non-Georgians in rights, and thus is perceived as containing a threat in view of the high ethnic diversity in Georgia. An essentially mediaeval ideal of an ethnocentric unitary centralized State is perceived in masses of population as a guarantee of justice and stability, and any discussed model of decentralized federal arrangement of the State is perceived as equally apprehensive.

Georgia is also remarkable in that the main source of stability in post-Soviet Georgia has been its President Eduard Shevardnadze, a number one strategic asset for the country. Yet, as he reached the age of 71 this year and his presidency cannot last forever, and also in view of the possibility of new terrorist attempts on his life, this situation also contains a serious security risk: what will happen when Shevardnadze does not lead the country anymore?

Moreover, the President turned into the main stronghold of stabilization in the country exactly because of the scarcity of other internal sources of stability, which objectively makes this factor growingly frail.

Speaking of the economic prospect, there is a growing interest in the West in developing the Caucasian natural resources and transit connections from/to Central Asia. One of the pipeline routes for the extracted Azeri crude oil will pass through Georgian territory to the Supsa terminal in western Georgia. Contrary to enthusiastic fantasies frequently told in the local media about the expected dividends, real income from the transit will be modest. However, Azeri oil and Georgia’s favourable geographic location may be seen as one source of stability and hope on the way to settle the Abkhazia conflict.

The internal social situation, despite unemployment and extremely low salaries of those employed by the State (equivalent to USD 20 or USD 30 per month), has been increasingly quiet in recent years. Although not entirely free from corruption, the police has

slowly yet stably enforced law and order, the process being backed up by passing the relevant legislature in Parliament.

Cooperating with the CIS structures, Georgia has at the same time steadily moved towards incorporation in European structures and programs. The latest achievement for Georgia is full membership of the Council of Europe since January 1999 (which even assaults on the President's life and other destabilization attempts could not hinder). Apart from being a formal acknowledgement of the progress in reform in Georgia, this membership should have more practical impact than e.g. Georgia's individual program within NATO's Partnership for Peace Program.

Until recently, experts were unanimous in naming as major internal factors of insecurity the sad state of affairs of the national economy, along with the impaired territorial integrity of the country. The state of industry and agriculture may today not be much better than it was some years ago, yet the growth rate was 12% in the last year which promoted Georgia to the third place in the world (!), Bosnia ranking first, and Albania second. Obviously, one has to start from naught to reach such rates of growth. And still, the slow privatization of enterprises, the granting of loans for small businesses, and support for income generation projects are gradually doing their job, and the picture is changing.

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have taken care of the national currency stabilization, as soon as it was introduced in October 1995. The internal currency stabilization fund of c. USD 60,000,000 had been created to back it up, and strict requirements were put forward simultaneously for handling internal revenue and trade issues. Fiscal and economical institutions of the newly established Georgian State have been also cooperative, although it meant taking painful measures such as freezing people's scarce salaries and liberalizing prices. Social unrest was to be expected.

Surprisingly, the population showed solidarity and understanding of a crucial moment in the country's development, keeping criticism down to strong-language-and-no-action forms. As a result, the in-



flation rates were kept at amazingly low levels, although steadily increasing, through all the years that followed.

If at the moment of the introduction of the Georgian Lari (GEL) in October 1995 USD 1 equaled GEL 1.23, in September 1998 USD 1 equals GEL 1.35. The first moderate shock the national currency experienced, yet managed to overcome, was in early September 1998 as a result of a profound crisis which developed in Russia. That was one of the moments when even nostalgic people thanked God they were no longer closely tied to the shaky Russian economy. Matters aggravated later though with USD 1 raising to GEL 2.5 at the turn of the year, for the first time raising serious doubts of the national currency in the future. Prices went up slightly, and, despite energetic efforts to stabilize the currency rate, have not dropped since.

Russia is still perceived in Georgia as a number one threat, “a clear and present danger”. Not by its current policy, but by its mere existence in Georgia’s neighbourhood. A dominating public perception has been that Georgia is cursed with being Russia’s neighbour, that it is in deepest strategic interests of Russia to dominate the whole of the Caucasus region to which Georgia is a key, and that this will forever be so, unless either of them seizes to exist. According to the same perception, Russia cannot reconcile with Georgia’s or other Caucasus nations’ independence, and will use every resort, including instigating/escalating/manipulating ethnic conflicts to increase her influence at the expense of weakening or destroying their statehood. This cannot change with time, leadership or political rule: future “democratic” Russia will be as threatening to Georgia, as was the Tsarist Russian Empire, or the totalitarian Soviet Union. The only alteration in Russian policies and strategies in the Caucasus may occur as a result of Russia’s disintegration, or of the loss of her strategic assets.

Russia is held largely responsible for Georgia’s defeat in the Abkhazian war, for massive support of “aggressive separatism” in other parts of the Caucasus, and the general feeling is that, as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, she in turn got a breakaway Chechnya. Yet, as time passes, emotions give way to sober analysis, and more and

more people realize that for Georgia staying independent may be reconcilable with neighbourly co-existing and even cooperating with Russia, especially in view of the decline of the Moscow-designed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Pragmatically determined horizontal ties and alliances between the CIS member states are developing from the collapsing Commonwealth. One of those corridors is going to link Central Asia via South Caucasus to the West. In view of the increasing interest in the Caucasus world closely related to the prospect of Caspian oil transportation to the West, the idea of a "Eurasian corridor", "the Great Silk Route", became popular again. The south-western arch via Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan (GUAM), and further through Uzbekistan, is one of such groupings marking the skeleton of the Eurasian corridor to facilitate the East-West trade/economic transactions via the Black and Caspian seas. Should destabilization reach a crucial level in Georgia, which is an important link in this corridor, it would inevitably affect these plans. In view of all this, the international community still fails to mobilize forces to prevent undesirable developments in the region from materialization.

In recent years the South-Caucasian nations were trying to satisfy their immediate security needs by appeasing the Russian strategic interest in maintaining a tolerable Russian military presence in the region. Not yet being able to secure their borders or to settle internal disputes independently, Georgia and Azerbaijan would consider their long-term security guarantee to be a treaty-based Western protection and a "real border" with Russia (such as the Baltic states), while Armenia (being landlocked and naturally detached by having no common border with Russia) would perceive the same as a security risk. Armenians, although no less determined to ensure their independent statehood, are trying to maintain it through their strategic partnership with Russia, even at the expense of further alienation from the rest of the Caucasus.

It has long been clear that without catering to what each of the major players in the region considers to be their indispensable strategic interest, it is impossible to achieve lasting peace in the

Caucasus. Cooperation between the three South-Caucasian states – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – has always been understood as being a number one issue. Even so, approaches to this goal still vary in all three states. Georgia’s first post-Communist ethno-nationalist leadership tried to promote an idea of “the Caucasian Home” for the indigenous nations in the region that totally disregarded Russia’s interest. The failure of ethno-nationalist regimes in almost all post-Soviet states marked the transition to a new stage of rationalization of national goals and perspectives. Several times President Shevardnadze tried to initiate the process of coordination/ cooperation between the Caucasus states that could lead to sustainable peace and stability in the region, and might entitle the region to be increasingly resistant to external manipulation. However, general sentiment in Georgia is that the Caucasus is so diversified in itself as to make any attempts of regional integration futile.

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ICCN participated in the “Ethnicity in European Security” Program, coordinated by the Center for International Relations at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada and was also involved in the Initiative in Georgian-South Ossetian Dialogue of the Conflict Management Group/Harvard Negotiation Project.

ICCN jointly coordinates the project “Reintegration and Disintegration in the FSU: Implications for Regional and Global Security” with the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University and also jointly coordinates the Initiative in Georgian-Abkhazian Dialogue with International Alert, UK.

ICCN financially supports projects and publications by NGO's and groups of scholars aiming at promoting democratic changes, conflict analysis and peace studies. ICCN publishes the periodical *The Bulletin of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation* and books, such as *Understanding Conflict, A Collection of Works*, edited by George Khutsishvili (1998), (see also *Georgica* no. 3 of September 1998, page 33). Khutsishvili organized the joint NATO-ICCN Workshop "Developing a Regional Security Concept for the Caucasus" in Tbilisi in October 1996.

Khutsishvili is the author of the *Culturgram of Georgia* (*Culturgrams* are published by Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA); a broad range of his publications covers psychological fiction to systems analysis of international relations and conflict studies. Teaches *Conflict Theory* at the Department of International Relations and International Law at Tbilisi State University (since 1994); was Vice President of the Georgian Academy of Philosophical Sciences (1995-1997).

**1999**

How Can Citizen Diplomacy Succeed when an

“Official” Diplomacy Fails?

(The Case of Abkhazia)

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(Tbilisi, Georgia)

# 1999

*The Case*

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*confrontation, and the ways to activate international organizations in order to foster*

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*conference by the organizers coincided with successful completion of the NATO air*

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Georgia, International Conference, Ethnic Cleaning in Abkhazia, July 6-7, 1999, Tbilisi, Georgia.

## HOW CAN CITIZEN DIPLOMACY SUCCEED WHEN AN “OFFICIAL” DIPLOMACY FAILS? (THE CASE OF ABKHAZIA)

The Conference has convened on a question of paramount importance: recognition from the international community of the fact of ethnic cleansing of ethnic Georgian population of Abkhazia done during and after the Georgian-Abkhaz armed confrontation, and the ways to activate international organizations in order to foster the settlement in, and return of the IDPs to Abkhazia. The time chosen for the conference by the organizers coincided with successful completion of the NATO air strike stage of the Kosovo crisis, and should have alerted the international community to another pending job for them: recognition of the ethnocide and ethnic cleansing in Abkhazia and “enforcement of peace” on the Abkhaz separatist leadership. Just how realistic has been this expectation is another question.

The current situation in Abkhazia is a “no-war, no-peace” situation, to the detriment of both Abkhaz and Georgian peoples. Nobody is satisfied with the pace and results of peacemaking process,

and there is a lot of talk about the insufficient impact of international organizations on the process of negotiations. Russian peace-keeping forces stationed along the demarcation line are perceived in Georgia as an obstacle on the way to a negotiated solution, and the demand of their removal or replacement is part of most political parties' agendas in Georgia. Everybody's understanding is that continuous failure of the negotiation process naturally fosters frustration in masses of IDPs whose living conditions fall short of any civilized standard, which in turn breeds aggression in them towards support of any parties that advocate forced/military solution of the problem. Negotiating agreement without giving in still seems impossible in public perception. On the other hand, communities on both sides of the conflict are tired of what is described as recurrent unsuccessful efforts to bring the positions of the parties somewhat closer, and facilitate an agreement.

Georgia has been through several major crises since the collapse of the Soviet Union, including civil confrontation in late 1991, and the Georgian-Abkhaz armed confrontation in 1992-93 followed by a mass exodus of ethnic Georgians from Abkhazia. Despite the deteriorating living conditions, isolation and the fact that no nation in the world would recognize their independent statehood, the Abkhaz are marked with high level of internal consolidation in favor of independence or creation of a symmetrical "(con)federation union" with the Georgian state where the right of secession (in Abkhaz view vs Georgian expectations) should be envisaged.

### **LEGAL ASPECTS OF POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE ABKHAZIA STATUS PROBLEM**

In connection with the unsolved Abkhazia problem, a federalist solution represents again the threshold of imaginable. Threat perception is too high among most Georgians, and the Ajara case of a region actually uncontrolled from the center, is brought about as an example of what decentralization can bring to the country. With decentralization of power actually deepening, not only with regard

to Ajara, but also in most other subregions of Georgia, a unitary state structure is still publicly perceived as a stability guarantee.

Federalism and multiculturalism seem to Western experts to be natural remedies to try on the Georgian internal disputes, before it evolves to an appropriate model of a consociational democracy. The Georgian Constitution leaves the question of administrative-territorial structure of the country open “until the resolution of ethno-territorial conflicts and restoration of the territorial integrity of the country”.

Prevailing public opinion in Georgia is that federalism weakens a country by delegating too much power to subregional authorities, that it invites them, as well as ethnic minorities, to claim increasing autonomization and/or secession. In short, federalism is perceived as a threat. The only theoretical exclusion to this rule is made for the Abkhaz who are an indigenous ethnic group in Georgia, and would be unlikely to accept anything short of a symmetrical federative union with Georgians. Problems caused by the internal disputes intertwine with the general transitional issues common for all NIS (newly independent states) to the effect of psychological disproportions in assessing both the problems and feasibility of solution.

### **CIVIL SOCIETY BUILDING IN GEORGIA AND THE POTENTIAL OF CITIZEN DIPLOMACY**

Citizen diplomacy has at the conference been compared to a Russian cartoon character Cat Leopold who keeps saying to the mice that are tantalizing him, “Guys, let’s live like friends”. A wide-spread disbelief in potentialities of second-track diplomacy showed itself again, this time reinforced by the Kosovo process (there were only two voices definitely in favor of citizen diplomacy, apart from mine).

This may be explained as a combined effect of general fatigue in regard to the conflict, unwillingness of the international agencies involved to expand/modify their mandates, as well as the impact of radical political groups on public perceptions and public opinion.

Transition period has intensified a continuous struggle between the old and the new. Civil society building, although not at all an easy process in Georgia, has reached a certain momentum, and is increasingly influencing the internal political processes. NGOs in Georgia do not hesitate to confront the official or public opinion if they believe the democratic process is in danger. Despite all the obstacles, Georgia is gradually turning into an open society based on democratic values. The same process in post-war secessionist Abkhazia, if at all started, has yet to reach the stage when it is publicly identifiable. The Abkhaz remain a closed society. The reason for these the Abkhaz themselves are inclined to link to the blockade (economic sanctions imposed on Abkhazia by the CIS summit in 1997), but it is obviously deeper than that.

A post-war euphoria has decreased in most of the Abkhaz, and sober voices are more often heard; however, insulting passages to the Georgian nation and especially its armed forces are still frequent in the Abkhaz papers. Normalization of relationships between the two communities is a complex and difficult process, and restoring/building confidence requires respect of mutual dignity.

On the other hand, against such a background, any success of a citizen diplomacy process becomes particularly visible. On the part of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN) these were the ten non-official Georgian-Abkhaz group meetings started since June 1, 1996, in partnership with Abkhaz NGOs and with facilitation from International Alert, London, U.K. In 1997/99 the program was supported by the TACIS Democracy Program of the European Union and Caritas-Holland. The group meetings were lately marked with increasingly active regional, especially North-Caucasian component, which has played a constructive role in promoting peace process, developing professional, scholarly contacts and parallel/joint projects. Most remarkable have been women's, young leaders, and ex-combatants meetings. The latter two resulted in creation of professionally focused peace movements by their participants. The overall process had its apogee in the Caucasian Forum of NGOs for Peace and Non-violence in the Caucasus founded in Nalchik, capital



of Kabardino-Balkaria Republic of Russian North-Caucasus by the forty-two participant NGO leaders in July of 1998, and adoption of the Elbrus Declaration. A total number of different participants in all meetings exceeds 100.

The numbers, even if they include influential people on both sides, may seem too small to impact the political processes, but the options of peaceful settlement are bound to grow as soon as the current disbelief in the potential of civil society, as well as unsubstantiated hopes for foreign intervention are overcome.

## CONCLUSION

Citizen diplomacy is a modernist replacement for the classic “*si vis pacem, para bellum*”: i.e. without preparing public peace while still in the war conditions, no political decisions may ever be implemented. In the case of Georgian-Abkhaz dispute, this is true primarily because:

(a) lack of communication between communities aggravates an enemy image and a siege mentality, makes a community in question more vulnerable to political demagoguery, manipulations with information, and media warfare; citizen diplomacy helps prevent these destructive development to a peace process;

(b) citizen diplomacy meticulously works towards activating of a human factor in bridging the existing gaps, having a decisive impact on a political process only if sufficiently supported by civic society in respective communities; otherwise, it creates a vivid example of a missed opportunity;

(c) no external intervention can solve the Georgian-Abkhaz dispute; it is solely a responsibility of the parties to conflict to develop a direct negotiation process; moreover, no global “peace-enforcing” agencies like NATO will interfere in the Abkhazia case;

(d) in the Abkhazia case, keeping in mind the halted negotiations and the general frustration about the peacemaking process, there is simply no other alternative than developing citizen diplomacy efforts. If we really want to reach the solution.

8 January 1999

## NGOs in the NIS: Transcending Post-Totalitarianism in Public Perceptions (The Case of Georgia)

George Khutsishvili, Ph.D.

1999

*“Do you know KGB and CIA have a joint center in Tbilisi which controls everything in this country? It is a building up Belinsky Street disguised as ‘Betsy’s Hotel’. Why would KGB and CIA cooperate? They are really one: all superpowers have a common goal in exploiting and strangling smaller nations, not letting them grow up. They have their agents of influence in newly appeared strange-looking organizations financed from abroad.”*

*Tbilisi taxi driver to a passenger*

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, 8 January 1999.

The atheist Soviet Union developed to fatalistically lock the world up in a closed vertical structure: in seven decades people were mystified to believe that all that was happening at lower points was planned at and controlled from higher points until we

## NGOS IN THE NIS: TRANSCENDING POST-TOTALITARIANISM IN PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS (THE CASE OF GEORGIA)

*“Do you know KGB and CIA have a joint center in Tbilisi which controls everything in this country? It is a building up Belinsky Street disguised as ‘Betsy’s Hotel’. Why would KGB and CIA cooperate? They are really one: all superpowers have a common goal in exploiting and strangling smaller nations, not letting them grow up. They have their agents of influence in newly appeared strange-looking organizations financed from abroad.”*

*Tbilisi taxi driver to a passenger*

A so-called third sector or NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have become a litmus paper for the post-totalitarian transition in the newly independent states (NIS).

## **GEORGIAN NGOS AS CAPTURED IN A CONSPIRATORIAL MINDSET**

The atheist Soviet Union developed to fatalistically lock the world up in a closed vertical structure: in seven decades people were mystified to believe that all that was happening at lower points was planned at and controlled from higher points until we reached the highest point in the hierarchy: the ultimate and uncontrolled Center of the subordinate universe. The church-going West, on the contrary, grew to discourage “conspiracy theorists” in favor of the free market, right to the point that J. Edgar Hoover was thought to be invented by vacuum cleaner promoters.

Real number of NGOs;

Grant: a new realm in post-Soviet reality;

Perception of grants in various sections of society;

External perception of the NGOs:

Government; public; security services; traditional Soviet institutions: TSU, Academy of Science;

NGOs against the background of ethnoculture and mentality;

NGO feedback with a political sphere;

NGOs and international organizations represented in the country; UNDP case.

It is vital to keep in mind that for decades one smaller group decided for the rest of society, and grew convinced they had this lifetime right from god. In post-Soviet years people “in charge” had for some time to watch how NGOs grew and became stronger, independently contacted international missions domestically and donors abroad, participated in and organized large-scale events. Then they decided to play safe, and prepare international community represented in the country against NGOs...

Internal perception of the NGOs:

Successful NGOs by less successful; successful by successful; new NGOs vs established ones.

Competition of NGOs: rules of game, tactics, alliances;

Prospects of development;

Favorable regime in Georgia compared to other NIS: illusion or reality?

Frustrated communities with a fragmented world outlook need a bugaboo. Western donors and charity funds in Russia and, especially, Belarus turned out to be very convenient objects for letting the steam out. The Belarus authorities have dealt with the annoying foreign agents in a most radical way: the missions were simply closed. It takes more effort in Russia, and the outcome is not yet obvious. Says Russian TV journalist Sergey Dorenko in his widely broadcast 1997-98 series of investigations of the "ONEXIM-Bank" case and the "American domination plans in Russia", "The greatest speculant in the world, George Soros, offers numerous "grants", meaning really miserable aims, to Russian scientists and scholars, in exchange for becoming his agents of influence throughout the country". More than elsewhere in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a strong public sentiment exists in Russia to apprehend a large-scale Western involvement in crisis management and humanitarian assistance.

In a centrifugal South Caucasus, active diaspora in the West and Shevardnadze's international reputation have made for donors' deep involvement in, respectively, Armenia and Georgia, compared to a more authoritarian though self-sustainable Azerbaijan. Azeri NGOs reportedly have serious difficulties both in registering themselves, and in operating inside the country. Georgia, on the other hand, has been recently known as the most favorable place for NGOs in the CIS, thus reaffirming the image of a country as strongly inclined towards democratic reform and final incorporation into Europe. Indeed, a huge number of NGOs and a simplified registration procedure confirm this picture. Yet, what is a composition of factors: is it a purposeful encouragement of free associations, or just a weakness of the state to control and repress them?

1999

In post-Soviet years people still try to read new facts in an old and familiar framework. Average person whose life depends on miserable salary in a state budgeted institution, is understandably irritated by the existence of other equally average persons, ununderstandably much better off than him/her. Georgian press which carefully follows public perception patterns reinforces this attitude.

Says a high-ranking Georgian state security man: "It is unimaginable that main foreign intelligence agencies leave the grant-distribution processes in the NIS, as well as the resulting NGO intellectual products unattended; even if they do not directly run the show, they make sure the NGO people involved in grant-receiving are purposefully brainwashed: this should also be an important objective".

Limits of Power Distribution in Georgia and the Abkhazia Dilemma:  
Analysis vs. Perceptions

By George Khutsishvili

# 1999

## A Picture of Georgia from Today's Standpoint

*Another failed coup attempt fourth in four years was announced May 24 in Tbilisi. A group of former and acting military and security ranks allegedly directed by and supported from "foreign countries" have been detained. They have not managed to accomplish anything, but the investigation claims to have sufficient evidence they were plotting to forcefully take power in the country.*

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, 1999.

*... was specially stressed at the ceremony in Strasbourg that Georgia (already!) represents a country of developed democracy and civil society, where human rights are well protected... At least, that is how the country looks from there.*

## LIMITS OF POWER DISTRIBUTION IN GEORGIA AND THE ABKHAZIA DILEMMA: ANALYSIS VS PERCEPTIONS

### A PICTURE OF GEORGIA FROM TODAY'S STANDPOINT

Another failed coup attempt, fourth in four years was announced May 24 in Tbilisi. A group of former and acting military and security ranks allegedly directed by and supported from "foreign countries" have been detained. They have not managed to accomplish anything, but the investigation claims to have sufficient evidence they were plotting to forcefully take power in the country.

In February 1999 Georgia joined the Council of Europe as a full member. Azerbaijan, in spite of all investments and expectations laid on it, as well as Armenia have yet to deserve that honor. For a foreign eye, Georgia represents a fairly quiet nation (if not for occasional news about failed coup attempts) determined to overcome its hardships and build a civilized state. It was specially stressed at the ceremony in Strasbourg that Georgia (already!) represents a country

of developed democracy and civil society, where human rights are well protected... At least, that is how the country looks from there.

What about reality? For an insider, a modern-day Georgia represents a case of a slower pace of democratic reform and civil society-building than would be fair. Shevardnadze's leadership created privileges for the country, e.g. the foreign credit-boosted state budget has increased tenfold in five years, yet the income from the imported free-market cigarette trade far exceeds that from national industry and agriculture. Petrol selling is no more controlled by gunmen, but a more sophisticated corruption is rampant, bureaucratic apparatus is enormously boosted, most taxes collected do not reach the treasury, and the energy supply sphere, as well as the customs had to be sold to foreign stakeholders. With the exception of summer months, people are heavily depressed by the power crisis: in 1998/99 most part of Tbilisi was supplied with electricity in the periods of 8-10 a.m. and 8-11 p.m., the situation outside the capital city being even more depressing.

Parliamentary elections are approaching in fall 1999, and the presidential elections in 2000. Shevardnadze has overwhelming chances to be reelected, although his creation – Citizens' Union of Georgia, now a ruling party in the Parliament, has lost much of its credit in voters, letting the competing Labor Party to dominate in the newly established Tbilisi Sakrebulo (City Council), a notable outcome of the fall 1998 local elections. Competition activates with the approaching elections. Among the most active political forces outside parliamentary majority are the Socialist Party, Laborists, and the National-Democratic Party.

Nationalist groups are sporadically active, but nationalism is deep-rooted in Georgia. It exists almost exclusively in the form of ethnic nationalism, although it is not called so. "Ethnic" has been perceived in mass consciousness as something inferior compared to "national", and "nation" has been defined as "unity of persons united by common genetic origin, language, history and culture". Respectively, a notion of nation-state is often misunderstood as a "titular-nation's-state". Since the start of the year 1999 the soci-

ety has been a couple times through a major predicament, first when MP Guram Sharadze inspired a campaign for bringing back into passports/IDs the nationality requisite abolished by the Parliament decree in 1996, and later when the national-patriots protested against taking historic, especially Orthodox Christian valuables from Georgian museums to a planned exposition in the U.S. It is worth mentioning here that in regard to the “passport issue”, as it was dubbed in Georgia, Georgian NGOs for the first time protested in a consolidated action to the end that the President proposed to postpone hearings on the subject in the Parliament.

Understandably for a post-totalitarian society, most Georgians dwell on a presumption that their independence, freedom and statehood are so fragile that anything short of a rigid unitary power construction should be ruled out for their country, and autonomies are seen as obstacles to that. Knowing that this would exclude any solution for the Abkhaz/Georgian relationship, they presume that the case is per se unsolvable, unless forced by some overwhelming external force majeure factor to a favorable end: restoration of the Georgian jurisdiction in Abkhazia in a way that made up for the humiliation of defeat. Nothing short of that is publicly perceived as an acceptable solution. No internal power is credited enough to carry this out, negotiations are discarded as bullshit, and the total mobilization of the nation is also seen as unrealistic, but... NATO had been mentioned from time to time, as a kind of wishful thinking.

Suddenly, the NATO theme has recently been beefed up with regard to the Kosovo crisis, as at last creating a working model of “international community’s just, full-scale, and uncompromizing reaction to ethnic cleansing”. The fact that NATO may also be seen as actually advocating a secessionist party is disregarded. The result: overwhelming appreciation of the NATO actions in Yugoslavia, not a slightest criticism or expression of regret both in official and independent Georgian TV channels and press about the casualties and humanitarian catastrophe in the Balkans. Only a hopeful expectation that from now on a Yugoslav model of NATO actions may be legitimized, and applied again in the Caucasus case, if not as

1999



a universal remedy. West's interest in using South Caucasus as a transit corridor for the Azeri crude oil and Azeri/Kazakh gas (TRACE-CA and INOGATE projects, the Great Silk Route, etc.; see more at length below) is seen in Georgia as a realistic ground on which the NATO involvement in forcing separatists to peace may materialize in South Caucasus.

Even if rendered by many as a mere fantasy, such theories work towards raising the rating of some political groups in view of the coming elections. The Abkhazia Liberation Party has been created in spring 1999 led by the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic's government-in-exile and their IDP activists (approx. 50,000 members at the inception). Tamaz Nadareishvili was unanimously elected chairman at the founding assembly.

The Role of the CIS Conference in Peace-Building, Civil Society Development, and Human Rights Protection in Georgia (the Years 1996-2000 and Beyond)

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D.

Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation  
Tbilisi, Georgia

2000

*CISCONF and Georgia*

As many other newly independent nations in transition, Georgia is still suffering from the problems inherited from the totalitarian period, rapid collapse of the empire, and a subsequent civil confrontation: regional/internal conflicts, humanitarian crises, forced migration, social insecurity, etc. Since then international organizations, and the countries friends of Georgia have been very active in trying to help the country out of the crisis.

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Georgia, The CIS Conference, May, 2000.

Certain expectations were connected with the launch of the CIS Conference in Geneva in May/June 1996, establishment of the Steering Committee and the Working Groups, and development of the Program of Action and National Development Plans.

## THE ROLE OF THE CIS CONFERENCE IN PEACE-BUILDING, CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT, AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION IN GEORGIA (THE YEARS 1996-2000 AND BEYOND)

### CISCONF AND GEORGIA

As many other newly independent nations in transition, Georgia is still suffering from the problems inherited from the totalitarian period, rapid collapse of the empire, and a subsequent civil confrontation: regional/internal conflicts, humanitarian crises, forced migration, social insecurity, etc. Since then international organizations, and the countries friends of Georgia have been very active in trying to help the country out of the crisis. Rapidly growing civic sector in Georgia is itself a proof of a considerable potential that needs to be supported and encouraged by the developed nations. In many cases the international community has demonstrated its strong support for the third sector in Georgia, but it still lacks suf-

ficient recognition and support at home, to be able to realize its potential to a full extent.

Certain expectations were connected with the launch of the CIS Conference in Geneva in May/June 1996, establishment of the Steering Committee and the Working Groups, and development of the Program of Action and National Development Plans. Most part of these expectations did not materialize, although it would be unfair to say CISCONF had no impact on developments in Georgia. We need to consider this situation in view of the major problems challenging the Georgian society.

The most important of the problems identified at the inception of the Geneva process and not overcome in the year 2000, include:

- The impaired territorial integrity of the country, unsolved ethno-territorial conflicts;
- Large numbers of forced migrants, and a “frozen” negotiation process;
- Slow pace of democratic reform, of peace mentality and liberal value shaping in Georgia;
- Systemic corruption, mismanagement, low political culture and incompetence in many spheres, including migration issues;
- Lack of recognition and understanding of civic sector both from the general public and the authorities;
- Insufficient coordination between NGOs, resulting in their insufficient participation in/impact on decision-making processes; insufficient feedback with government.

### **ICCN AND THE CISCONF PROCESS**

The ICCN capacity-building activities have developed from support to empowerment in the first place, this pertains to the Conflict Resolution Training Program in Georgia, supported by the Norwegian Refugee Council since 1996, the crisis prevention networks such as NEWMEC (Network for Early Warning and Monitoring of

Ethnic Conflict in Georgia, supported by the MacArthur Foundation), and peace confidence building measures in Georgia-Abkhazia, supported by TACIS Democracy Program. Support of gender issues turned into the establishment of the Caucasus Women's Research and Consulting Network (CWN) focused on women's rights monitoring, studies of women's hidden or open discrimination and trafficking.

The CISCONF materials regularly distributed by the UN have been very instrumental for developing these activities.

In September 1999 ICCN held a conference on Forced Migrants and the Conflict Management in Georgia. Many aspects of the discussion of the problem of integration of IDPs into Georgian society stemmed from the Istanbul meeting of Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance. The conference clearly demonstrated that IDPs represent a strong and as yet unrealized potential in the Georgian society, which can constructively or destructively influence the country's development and future.

2000

### **GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE PROCESS STRUCTURE**

ICCN has been accredited with the CISCONF ruling bodies from the inception of the process. Since then its participation developed first within the Working Group for Humanitarian Assistance, and later in the Working Group for Conflict Management. The latter in 1998/99 became itself the arena of internal dispute on the principles of selection of leading agencies (in this case International Alert and the Kazakhstan Center for Conflict Resolution) and of allocation and transparency of the budget. The very existence of such dispute within a working group is a serious sign of structural drawbacks. Another problem has been the national NGO/government relations.

If the CISCONF reporting system and the structure of Geneva annual events were such as to inherently include a requirement of joint NGO/government presentations assessments statements, as well as open discussions of the issues involved with participation of both civic sector and governments, the impact of the process might

be different. On the contrary, the sessions seemed to be designed so as to provide a comfortable distance between the authorities and NGOs, or to preclude them from directly facing each other's arguments.

The gap between the governments and civic sector was obvious during the 1999 Geneva meeting: on the day NGOs reported on their activities, they at least discussed their relations with their governments: however, on the day the governments reported on their activities, government representatives very seldom mentioned the role and input of NGOs, the Georgian government representatives being exemplary in that. Observers might get the impression there is no civic sector in Georgia at all.

#### **THE CISCONF FOLLOW-UP PROCESS AFTER 2000**

CISCONF has played a role, however modest, in the study of migration, humanitarian assistance, and civil society building issues in the CIS countries. After the more or less amorphous CISCONF process in the expiring period, the programs to start after 2000 need to be more focused on support of civic society building, empowerment of IDPs and other vulnerable groups through peace and tolerance education, including IDPs in decision-making processes and facilitating the NGO/government collaboration.

More transparency will be needed in selecting leading agencies and allocation of budgets.

### *Catastrophe Syndrome Reemerging in Georgians?*

The South Caucasus region has been growing in its importance for the West due to the started projects of transportation of Caspian crude oil and, in the future, gas to Europe via Georgia and Turkey. With Western aid Georgia was able in the recent years to be slowly recovering from the scars of previous civil war, internal armed conflict, economic collapse, terrorist activities, etc. However, Russia seems to be fighting back to recapture the initiative in the escaping Caucasian market, while the latest developments in Georgia show a

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia. International Conference on Repatriation of Meskhertians, Ankara, Turkey, 2000.

in relations with Russia have strangely coincided with reappearance of the internal problems in Georgia

People have to survive on salaries that are insufficient to make ends meet (about \$20 per

## MESKHETIAN REPATRIATION PROBLEM AND THREAT PERCEPTION IN GEORGIAN SOCIETY

### **CATASTROPHE SYNDROME REEMERGING IN GEORGIANS?**

The South Caucasus region has been growing in its importance for the West due to the started projects of transportation of Caspian crude oil and, in the future, gas to Europe via Georgia and Turkey. With Western aid Georgia was able in the recent years to be slowly recovering from the scars of previous civil war, internal armed conflict, economic collapse, terrorist activities, etc. However, Russia seems to be fighting back to recapture the initiative in the escaping Caucasian market, while the latest developments in Georgia show disturbing tendencies marked by a growing threat perception. The first energetic step made by Russia in this direction was the establishment of visa regime between RF and Georgia from December 5, 2000. The decisions concerning withdrawal of Russian military bases from the country, Georgia's acceptance of and sympathy for the Chechen refugees, recent unrest in Pankisi Canyon bordering Chechnya, all deepening cleavages in relations with Russia have

strangely coincided with aggravation of the internal problems in Georgia.

People have to survive on salaries/wages insufficient to make ends meet (about \$20 per month on average, and often delayed). The continuous/growing energy crisis for a number of years – for the moment Georgians have electricity only for a few hours a day – re-inserted in Georgians the feeling of unmanageability of the country and vulnerability of its independence. Georgians first experienced a catastrophe syndrome back in April 1989, and, despite all hardships managed to maintain an optimistic outlook. According to many, now it seems it may start again. Multidimensional perception of threat has been growing especially through the past fall and is likely to persist through the winter.

Dimensions of the perceived threat are:

- Weak and corrupted management in a resource less and unstable country;
- Small nation's self-perception and the external conspiracy mindset;
- Russia's destructive/subversive influence combined with the West's opportunistic and uninterested attitude as expressed by the international organizations represented in the country;
- Ethnic/cultural diversity and activeness of non-Orthodox Christian confessions in the country;
- Frozen conflicts and the impaired territorial integrity;
- Federalization/decentralization of the state power;
- Ethnic disproportion between/in minority populated areas and autonomization of the minority populated areas.

Although it is clear that not all of the listed worries are grounded, they nevertheless play an important role in shaping the mentality of a modern Georgian. Another spooky prospect is the "invasion" of Meskhetian repatriates to Georgia.

## MESKHETIAN REPATRIATION IN THE GEORGIAN PERCEPTION PRISM

At the entry in the Council of Europe in April 1999, Georgia has assumed responsibility to complete the legislative foundation for the repatriation of all Muslim Meskhetians to Georgia in the next two years, and the repatriation itself in the subsequent ten years. There is understanding in the Georgian civic society that ending the suffering of Meskhetians started at their deportation during World War II belongs to fundamental human rights sphere. At the same time, it is hardly expectable that a poor nation with weak state structures and in its period of transition to unclear destination would feel especially happy about the prospect of hundreds of thousands of homeless poor people repatriated to the country in the coming few years. The deported Meskhetians living in different regions/countries of CIS are usually divided in two groups, of which the smaller (“Hsna”) claim ethnic Georgian descent and/or seek incorporation in Georgian society, while the larger (“Vatan” et al.) identify as Turks (prospectively, Turkish citizens) and/or do not display any intent to assure Georgians of their loyalty to the state upon return. The question asked by many in Georgia is whether, by giving citizenship to culturally alien people, the latter are not encouraged to confront local population or to later raise the issue of secession. This is essential especially for the explosive Javakheti region bordering Armenia and Turkey and populated 92% by ethnic Armenians, highly apprehensive of the Meskh repatriation. They demand that, at least, repatriation does not take place compactly in Samtskhe-Javakheti region, and predict violent ethnic clashes if their concerns are disregarded.

To facilitate the process for the Georgian government, it is vital that all the organizations representing the Meskhetian Turks display realistic approach and take steps towards building confidence in the Georgian society.



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*Adams*, Director of the Political Communication Program, and Associate Professor of International Affairs in the Elliot School of International Affairs at the

# Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention

Edited by  
Albrecht Schnabel  
and Ramesh Thakur

Selective  
Indignation,  
and  
Citizenship

By George Khutsishvili and Albrecht Schnabel, *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention*, edited by Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur, UN University Press, 2000.

## THE KOSOVO CONFLICT: THE BALKANS AND THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

### INTRODUCTION

The conflicts between Serbia and Kosovo, and between NATO and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), have caused mixed reactions from countries and peoples throughout South-Eastern Europe. Whereas the Balkan countries were directly affected by the conflict, the Southern Caucasian countries of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan seem to be at first look too removed from the Balkans to be affected by the conflict in Kosovo. However, they do consider themselves part of Europe, part of the greater South-East European subregion, and future members of Europe's regional organizations and greater security community. Throughout the region, reactions ranged from strong support for either NATO or Serb actions to equally strong opposition. The reasons for such varied responses can be found in each country's and society's ethnic, religious, or political proximity to the conflicting parties and, in particular, in these countries' aspirations to join NATO and/or other Western political and economic organizations.

Whereas Orthodox states close to Yugoslavia were less enthusiastic about NATO's reaction, those close to the Kosovo Albanians were supportive. However, Muslim communities with a close affinity to the Kosovo Albanians (such as Turkey and Azerbaijan), but with their own separatist minority struggles, had a different issue to worry about: would support of NATO action not undermine their own efforts to keep separatist minority groups at bay?

Further, NATO action has been a mixed blessing to the region as a whole. The Balkans have been further destabilized by refugee movements, a devastated Kosovo, and a politically and economically much weakened Yugoslavia (whose GDP has slipped below the level of Albania). In the Southern Caucasus, various minority separatist groups, most prominently in Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia, have been encouraged by the international (NATO) community's apparent willingness to support the cause of independence against a perceived oppressive regime. For the titular nations in the Southern Caucasus (as well as in Turkey, which is examined in more detail in chapter 14 by Georgios Kostakos), this has not been without problems: loyalty to NATO (either as an existing or as an aspiring member) clearly conflicts with the Alliance's perceived new role as the protector of separatist minorities' rights and interests.

On the other hand, NATO's actions and the subsequently increased international presence in the region have brought much needed attention to the South-East European region. The international community was reminded that the Dayton Accords, which had ended the wars in Bosnia, have not put a lid on instability, ethnic competition, conflicting territorial claims, underdevelopment, and poverty in the region. Moreover, they have also reminded us of the important roles that need to be played in the region by non-military organizations – in particular the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations. The EU's subsequent attempt to reinvigorate its plans for a South-Eastern European Stability Pact, symbolized by a summit in Sarajevo, is an indication of this possible attempt to recommit the European Union to the region.

2000

## **THE CONFLICT IN KOSOVO AND REGIONAL NEIGHBOURS**

Throughout the Balkans, the conflict in Kosovo has prompted different responses. In the most general terms, those countries that had previous grievances against Belgrade and/or fell a close affinity to the plight of the Albanian Kosovars supported NATO's actions, because the attack weakened Belgrade within Yugoslavia and within the region at large. Those that felt a close affinity to Belgrade (for political or ethnic reasons) were critical of NATO's actions.

Despite these differences, there was agreement that the means of NATO's intervention were questionable, and that major power involvement in the Balkans (most often on their terms) is not desirable. The following discussion briefly summarizes some main reactions and responses from Yugoslavia's regional neighbours, with a particular focus on the conflict's impact on Bosnia-Herzegovina.

### **ALBANIA**

Until the end of NATO's war against Yugoslavia, Albania had been Europe's poorest state. Moreover, it still had not recovered from the antigovernment uprising in 1997. Local unrest and disorder were still common, in part as a result of the 1997 crisis. Despite the strong communal links between Albania and Kosovo, and Albanians' support for the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Kosovar separatist movement, the tens of thousands of dispossessed refugees flooding in from Kosovo during the conflict placed an immense burden on the country, both in economic terms and in terms of domestic security.

Albania has openly supported the Kosovars' struggle against Belgrade.<sup>1</sup> However, explicitly and implicitly, it has specifically supported neither the secession of Kosovo from Yugoslavia, nor the subsequent unification of Kosovo with Albania. The Albanian government is aware of the repercussions that may follow fears among

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<sup>1</sup> "Albania Says NATO Troops in Kosovo "Only Solution", BBC Monitoring Newsfile, London, 1 April 1999.

nations throughout the region of a larger, stronger Muslim Albania – which would possibly absorb Albanian communities not only from Kosovo but also from Macedonia. Tirana is sensitive to these fears, particularly as it pursues its campaign for Albanian membership in both NATO and the EU.<sup>1</sup>

### **MACEDONIA**

Macedonia is one of Kosovo's most vulnerable neighbours. During the conflict, it absorbed many hundreds of thousands of displaced Kosovo Albanians. It feared that this influx of Kosovars (who might have stayed long term if the war had continued) could have strengthened autonomy claims among its own ethnic Albanian community. Macedonia's Albanians make up about 25 per cent of the country's population and have long complained about their treatment by the titular Macedonian nation. The government feared that the conflict, if ongoing, could severely destabilize the country. On the other hand, it supported NATO's actions, because it considers NATO membership as a top foreign policy priority.

On the positive side, Macedonia received renewed attention in the wake of the conflict, and its aspirations for NATO membership have only been strengthened as a result of its cooperation with the Alliance during the conflict.

### **MONTENEGRO**

Montenegro is a constituent republic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However, to the dismay of Belgrade and despite NATO bombing of Yugoslav military installations in Montenegro, its pro-Western government under Milo Djukanovic has tried to remain neutral during the conflict with NATO. It, too, has been faced with the arrival of tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanian refugees. The economic burden of these refugees only compounded the difficul-

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<sup>1</sup> "Albanian President Calls for International Aid Programmes for the Region", BBC Monitoring European – Political, London, 21 May 1999.

ties Montenegro already faces as a result of international sanctions imposed against Yugoslavia.

During the war Djukanovic repeatedly called for an end to NATO bombing, because of the damage inflicted on Montenegro, the fear that Belgrade would take military action against this “unfaithful” Yugoslav republic, and because of the continuing influx of refugees.

In the aftermath of the war, Montenegro benefited from the widespread opposition in Serbia proper against the Milosevic regime, and from its government’s strong stance against Belgrade during the war. A new government in the FRY might be more sympathetic to Montenegro’s calls for greater autonomy. Even the Milosevic government offered to enter negotiations on autonomy talks, and vowed not to use military force if Montenegro seceded unilaterally. If it does not pursue independence from Serbia altogether, Montenegro might also find it attractive to collaborate more closely with a new government in Belgrade to create a stronger and internationally integrated and respected Yugoslav Federation.

## **BOSNIA**

Since the 1995 Dayton Accords, Bosnia has been the primary focus of the international community’s peacebuilding and conflict management efforts in the Balkans. While the OSCE successfully organized and monitored democratic elections and helped in rebuilding political, judicial, economic, and social structures, NATO’s Implementation Force (IFOR) and later, its Stabilization Force (SFOR) provided for the military security necessary to maintain peace in a country still suffering from a latent inter-communal conflict. The Bosnian conflict is far from solved and is in need of continuing international presence. The Kosovo conflict was both a blessing and a curse for Bosnia. On the one hand it forced Republika Srpska to refocus on Bosnia as a partner on the road towards prosperity and development (away from Belgrade). On the other hand, it distracted international (donor) attention away from Bosnia to Kosovo and other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

What influence did NATO's war in Yugoslavia have on Bosnia? The war had few significant practical consequences for Bosnia. Bosnia was still preoccupied with the decision of the High Representative to discharge Nikola Poplasen as President of Republika Srpska and the recent pro-Bosnian decision on the status of Brcko. The High Representative repeatedly appealed to the heads of government on all sides to avoid public statements about NATO's intervention and the Kosovo conflict, a request that was not honoured. Officials in Republika Srpska (RS) were particularly outspoken, most parties reacted with outrage to NATO bombing, and the Serbian Radical Party went so far as to refer to the genocide of the Serb people at the hands of NATO powers.

2000

The Serbs refused to continue further cooperation in Bosnia's common governing institutions, partly because of the decisions regarding President Poplasen and the status of Brcko, and partly owing to SFOR's cooperation with NATO during the bombing campaign (NATO planes were allowed to fly over Bosnian territory on their missions to Kosovo and the rest of the FRY). Republika Srpska's absence from common institutions has continued since the war.

Nevertheless, several positive developments are worth mentioning. Due to the rapid deterioration of the Serb currency, Bosnia's *konvertibilna marka (KM)* is now widely used in the RS. Further, the economic embargo against the FRY made it very difficult for the RS's oil refineries in Bosanski Brod to sell oil to the FRY. In response, RS is now redirecting its economic activities to the Bosnian Federation. This can be seen as a major opportunity for economic and, possibly, other cooperation between the Muslim Croat and Serb communities across the inter-entity boundary line. Finally, although the FRY has pulled out of all regional and subregional cooperative initiatives, the military and political representatives of the RS continue to participate.

The public reacted to the Kosovo crisis only after the start of the air campaign. Before the bombing started, Bosnians paid little attention to the deteriorating situation in Kosovo. During the war, Serbs were outraged while the Bosnian Muslims were supportive.

They appreciated the fact that Milosevic had to take responsibility for his actions – not only in the context of Kosovo, but also in reference to Belgrade’s support of the Bosnian Serbs during the wars between 1991 and 1995. The Bosnian Croats kept a low profile, partly because of the Tudjman administration’s involvement in similar ethnic expulsions of Serbs from the Krajina region and renewed attention given to the large number of Serb refugees living in the FRY. The Bosnians’ interest in the bombing campaign subsided very quickly, despite the influx of roughly 40,000 refugees from Serbia and Kosovo. Even now, the activities of the Kosovo Peacekeeping Force (KFOR) and the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) are followed with very little interest throughout Bosnia.

Has the implementation of KFOR had a negative effect on Bosnian security commitments from the international community? International organizations and non-governmental organizations have moved large numbers of their staff from Bosnia to Kosovo, and Russia has relocated a large number of its SFOR troops to Pristina. Despite the fact that much international assistance (military and economic) will be redirected from Bosnia to Kosovo, this has not happened to the dramatic degree that some expected. Moreover, one can assume that much aid would have been reduced anyhow in response to reports of corruption and misappropriation of international aid in Bosnia.

The EU’s Stability Pact summit in Sarajevo (August 1999), a direct response to the Kosovo conflict, brought international attention back to Sarajevo. However, little has changed in Bosnia despite initial signs that the Summit would give new momentum to Bosnian political integration. In general, as long as the international community does not shift further support from Bosnia to Kosovo (and recent developments suggest that commitment to Bosnia will be maintained at reasonable levels), the Kosovo conflict will have had little negative effect on post-conflict rebuilding in Bosnia. On the contrary, a potentially new government in Belgrade will likely lead to further de-radicalization of politics in Republika Srpska and

will contribute to increased cooperation between the federation and the RS.

## **SLOVENIA**

Slovenia has been on the periphery of Balkan politics since its short war of independence in 1991. The official reaction in Slovenia was favourable to NATO action in Kosovo. The public were also in favour of NATO strikes, because they were convinced that Milosevic would not budge without a show of force. The Slovenian premier, Janez Drnovsek, confirmed on 24 March, the day the bombing campaign started, that Slovenia's permission for NATO overflights of Slovenian territory (in force since October 1998) would remain valid. This position was reiterated by President Kucan. On 25 March, Slovenian foreign minister Boris Frlec confirmed that NATO aircraft had Slovenia's permission to land at Slovenian airports if needed.

While in general the Slovenian public supported NATO's air war, there was also considerable opposition. The Christian Social Union (KSU) expressed its opposition to NATO's intervention and the government's decision to grant the Alliance permission to use Slovenia's airspace. It was highly critical of two issues in particular: the fact that civilian targets such as hospitals and schools were hit by NATO bombing and the lack of prior authorization of the intervention through the UN Security Council.

Slovenian journalists criticized NATO's attack, on the Serbian TV station RTS. Although they strongly disagreed with Belgrade's suppression of free media in the FRY, they also rejected the use of brute force in eliminating government-run media outlets. Again, the emphasis was not on disagreement over the ends (opposition to Belgrade's regime), but on the means to reach this goal, i.e. the attempt to bomb Belgrade into submission.

## **CROATIA**

The vast majority of Croatians agreed with NATO air strikes, but the government kept a low profile domestically on the issue. Mem-

2000



bers of the Croatian political elite realized that they, too, could have become the target of NATO intervention in response to “Operation Flash and Storm” in 1995. In that context, the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague has indicted several generals, and the Croatian government has been resisting their extradition. Few organizations came out publicly in strong opposition to the air strikes (they included Serb associations and, among non-Serb organizations, B.a.B.e., a feminist group).

The government readily accepted refugees from Kosovo, making sure that, in particular, the EU, the OSCE, and the United States took note, but other refugees, including Albanians from Albania proper, were denied the right to asylum. The Serb community in Eastern Slavonia also kept a low profile, to avoid reprisals in an environment in which ethnic tensions continue to run high.

During the air strikes, Zagreb started to promote its interest in joining the Partnership for Peace, emphasizing that its place is in Central Europe and not in the Balkans. It argued that the crisis simply reaffirmed that Croatia and its armed forces should be seen as a crucial bulwark against Serb hegemony in the region. As with other states in the region, the war had negative consequences for Croatia: beyond a slump in trade with countries on trading routes that cut through Yugoslavia and in attracting foreign investment, Croatia’s greatly anticipated first major tourist season since the Yugoslav war never materialized.

## **BULGARIA**

Whereas most people in Slavic Orthodox Bulgaria opposed the NATO air campaign against Yugoslavia, the government supported the Alliance’s actions. The public sided with the Yugoslav government and its aversion to the growing political and cultural influence of Islamic communities in Europe. The Bulgarian government, however, considers close friendly relations with and, possibly, membership in NATO as a requirement for its security in the volatile Balkans.

The government did not perceive a military threat from the war in Kosovo, nor did it fear negative consequences from alienating the Milosevic government in Belgrade. It stated its desire to push for an autonomous Kosovo within Yugoslavia, without altering state borders. To substantiate its support for the Alliance's actions, it offered financial support for refugee camps in Macedonia. Even so, the Bulgarian government feared the economic consequences of continuing instability in the Balkans and its own isolation from East and West European markets, because the war had disrupted road links to Central and Eastern Europe, recipients of much of Bulgaria's fledgling export industry.

2000

## ROMANIA

Although maintaining friendly relations with its neighbour, Romania suffered economically from the war. Bridges across the Danube had been destroyed and navigation on the Danube was closed down altogether. Nevertheless, the Romanian government strongly supported NATO's intervention in the FRY. Immediately before the beginning of the air campaign, President Constantinescu stated that, "if peace negotiations fail, Romania would deem necessary and legitimate NATO's intervention to settle the conflict, and reiterates its decision to support any peace-restoring efforts and the humanitarian actions they entail". During the war, the government actively urged Milosevic to accept the peace plan offered by the G-8 countries and denounced Belgrade's policy of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. It also favoured an autonomous Kosovo within the borders of Yugoslavia. The government further called upon the UN Security Council to become more prominently involved in the resolution of the conflict. The Romanian desire to become a member of NATO remained unaltered by the Alliance's campaign against Serbia.

In summary, the reactions to the Kosovo crisis by Balkan states focused very little on the plight of the Kosovars. The most important concerns were to maintain and restore trading links to and via Yugoslavia, and to appear as a loyal potential future partner in the

NATO Alliance. Commitment to membership in NATO and, possibly, the EU clearly overrode feelings of ethnic and religious affinity to Yugoslavia. Moreover, Milosevic's poor reputation within the region only reinforced the lack of sympathy expressed for Yugoslavia's plight during the air campaign. Words of support and outrage came only from Republika Srpska. However, despite the fact that international action against Belgrade found broad support throughout the region, NATO's choice of response to Yugoslavia's actions in Kosovo an extended air war – found little support. If it had not been for the overwhelming desire of many states in the region to join the European Union and NATO, opposition to the war would probably have been more pronounced.

### **THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS AND THE KOSOVO CONFLICT**

Reactions in the Southern Caucasus to the evolving crisis over Kosovo have to be seen in the context of the various ethnic and intercommunal conflicts in the region and the desire by Armenia and, in particular, Georgia and Azerbaijan to become more closely integrated in the community of West European states and NATO. In the Georgian and Azerbaijani cases this would be at the expense of Russian influence in the region. Those reasons are of course not dissimilar from the aspirations of many East and Central European countries, including NATO's newest members. Suffering their own intercommunal conflicts (interstate and intrastate), the responses from Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan were as varied and driven by opportunism as in the Balkans.

### **POINTS IN COMMON BETWEEN KOSOVO AND THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS**

The Kosovo situation has much in common with that in the Caucasus: ethno-territorial disputes over a historically shared land between two or more ethnic groups who all insist that they are the indigenous population; a more or less recent demographic shift that is perceived by one of the groups as a security threat; a recently

experienced major catastrophe, such as the end of the Cold War (and, in the former Soviet Union, the break-up of an empire); the rise of ethno-nationalist ideology; and the rise of a charismatic leader who manipulates disputes to ensure his power at the expense of conflict escalation.

Moreover, violent clashes between the conflicting groups and subsequent ethnic cleansing lead to grave humanitarian crises. Government action (often based on mass consciousness which is internalized by leaders and their policies) demonstrates a disregard for human life, health, safety, and welfare, as expressed through abstract values of “historical truth”, “national pride”, “people’s will”, or “justice”. Violence is justified in the name of national interest, and principles of national integrity, identity, and borders are defined in terms of the existential survival of the nation. This all transpires in the context of a fragmentation of reality, a sense of victimization, an identity dissolution syndrome, and a prevalent paranoid obsession with external conspiracies and treachery. The velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia and the subsequent civilized Czech/Slovak divorce would be impossible in such communities: they perceive their disputes as ultimately zero-sum situations.

There are a number of similarities between the major parties to the conflicts in Kosovo and the Southern Caucasus. From the perspective of titular groups in the Southern Caucasus, separatist Albanian Kosovars are like the Karabakhi Armenians for Azeris or the Abkhaz for Georgians. Ethno-culturally, Serbs also exhibit a certain, though limited, behavioural and emotional closeness with the Caucasian peoples, especially with the Orthodox Christian Georgians and Armenians. They all consider war over historic land a sacred duty, where the nation should, if necessary, sacrifice part of itself for victory.

### **POINTS OF DIFFERENCE**

The primary difference is geopolitical: whereas the Southern Caucasian states (although having a certain strategic interest for

the West) are still marginal, Yugoslavia is an area of vital strategic interest for the West. On the other hand, the Southern Caucasus is a strategic asset for Russia, and has thus been under heavy Russian pressure. All Caucasian conflicts are locally perceived as being instigated by Russians.

The Serbs evince exactly those features that Georgians think they lack for preserving their territorial integrity, for instance with regard to the Abkhaz: Belgrade displayed highly consolidated action, resistance to external influence, a swift and ruthless reaction, and a militaristic national spirit. Yugoslavia is in the process of dissolution, but the Serbs are desperately trying to stop it. Georgians and Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, perceive themselves as defying a very probable capitulation to Russian might.

### **PERCEPTIONS OF THE KOSOVO CRISIS IN GEORGIA**

Understandably for a post-totalitarian society, most Georgians emphasize the presumption that their independence, freedom, and statehood are so fragile that anything less than a rigid unitary power structure should be ruled out for their country. Autonomous communities within the state are seen as obstacles to that. Georgians know that this approach precludes a viable solution to the Abkhaz/Georgian relationship. A widespread view is that the issue is per se unsolvable, unless some overwhelming external force intervenes to drive it towards a favourable conclusion. The restoration of Georgian jurisdiction in Abkhazia would make up for the humiliation of defeat. Nothing short of that is publicly perceived as an acceptable solution.

No internal power is willing or able to carry this out, negotiations are discredited, and the total mobilization of the nation is seen as unrealistic. NATO had been mentioned from time to time, as the hoped-for saviour. However, the "NATO option" has suddenly received new credibility as a result of the Alliance's handling of the Kosovo crisis. Here at last was an attempt to create a working model of the international community's just, full-scale, and uncom-

promising reaction to ethnic cleansing. However, the fact that NATO could also be seen as actually advocating a secessionist community was disregarded.

The effect was astounding: overwhelming appreciation of NATO's actions in Yugoslavia, no criticism or expressions of regret in either official or independent Georgian media about the casualties and the aggravation of the humanitarian catastrophe in the Balkans. What prevailed was a hopeful expectation that from now on a Yugoslav model of NATO action might be legitimized and applied in the Southern Caucasus (and in other regions within and outside of Europe).

In addition, the West's interest in using the Southern Caucasus as a transit corridor for Azeri crude oil and Azeri/Kazakh gas is seen in Georgia as reason enough for NATO to "force separatists to peace" in the Southern Caucasus.

2000

### **THE CONFLICT IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH**

The oldest of the post-Soviet ethno-territorial disputes, in Nagorno-Karabakh, remains unresolved. An enclave in Azerbaijan with no common borders with Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh was historically populated by Armenians and featured many Armenian sacred sites. It was the first to react to the rapid decline of the Soviet Empire. The immediate response by minority-populated autonomous regions to the growing insecurity within the Soviet Union was to protect themselves through increased or full sovereignty. That, in turn, provoked the exodus of minority ethnic groups. Inadequate reactions from titular nations only aggravated the tensions and led to de facto independent quasi-states in the Caucasus.

In the case of Karabakh, a secessionist war followed, fought between Azerbaijan and Armenian- and Russian-aided Karabakhis. The war resulted in a self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic that is linked with Armenia through a narrow (Lachin) corridor (in addition to over 20 per cent of Azeri territory around the corridor, excluded from Azeri jurisdiction). Negotiations are at a stand-still because Azerbaijan refuses to recognize Karabakh as an official par-

ty to negotiations and is demanding to talk to Armenia instead. The Armenians, in turn, deny that they are a party to the conflict and expect Azerbaijan to negotiate directly with Karabakh.

The Karabakh conflict produced over 1 million refugees, a humanitarian crisis on a scale comparable to that of Kosovo. However, the global media did not devote nearly as much coverage to the Southern Caucasian conflicts as they did to the Kosovo conflict. Post-Soviet theatres of conflict appear marginal in the international community's view in comparison with the Balkans.

### **THE ARMENIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Intracommunal relationships among Armenians affect domestic perceptions of the Kosovo crisis and the NATO/FRY dispute. There are considerable differences between the approaches and sentiments expressed by "domestic" Armenians and those of the Armenian diaspora. The Armenian diaspora is very powerful and influential, and its financial contribution to Armenia's development has been invaluable. Its members maintain pro-Armenian lobbying mechanisms within their home countries' establishments, as well as nationalist ideology support in Armenia proper, sometimes even exceeding the sentiments of domestic groups. The Western diaspora came to the conclusion that NATO actions indirectly supported the Karabakh cause and, thus, most of them supported NATO's actions in Yugoslavia. Among the Armenian diaspora worldwide, the US Armenians were in the most difficult position, because they found themselves caught between two seemingly reconcilable, but in fact incompatible, attachments. On the one hand, they wanted to remain loyal to US foreign policy, especially as this was widely supported by at least part of the international community; on the other hand, they wanted to support the prevailing sentiment of Armenians in Armenia.

Armenians in Armenia preferred to take a Russian stance. They continue to see Russia as their main strategic partner in the region, and they can easily relate to Russia's perspective on the Balkans.

Humanitarian protest against the bombing of civilian targets also played a particularly significant role in their attitude toward the Kosovo conflict.

### **THE AZERI PERSPECTIVE**

At first sight, the Azeri perspective on the Kosovo conflict is very similar to that in Georgia, and its stark difference from the Armenian position reveals deep intraregional problems in the Southern Caucasus. Azeri experts note that, although the prevailing sentiment during the events of spring 1999 was support for NATO actions, this was not as automatic or as strong as in Georgia. There were more open discussions on the topic of potential NATO membership, NATO's assistance in further detachment from Russia, and NATO's assistance in returning Karabakh.

At some point during the NATO air campaign Azeri politicians discussed the possibility of inviting NATO to solve the Karabakh problem, but they were suddenly struck by the obvious: if NATO had to bomb Belgrade to solve the Kosovo crisis, in the Azeri case they would most probably bomb Baku! After this realization they decided to abandon their plans of approaching NATO.

Azeri Islamists rallied for official support for their Albanian Kosovar brethren, which did, however, not materialize. In general, not much attention was paid to the entire crisis. On the other hand, Armenian reactions aroused feelings in Azerbaijan, particularly after Yerevan declared that Armenia's role in Nagorno-Karabakh was the same as NATO's role in Kosovo. Nevertheless, Azeris reacted positively to the inclusion of an Azeri unit in KFOR.

### **CONCLUSION: MIXED MESSAGES, MIXED BLESSINGS**

Throughout the Balkans, NATO and its actions were viewed sceptically. Although there was disagreement over the means and ends of NATO action, the Alliance was generally supported, because most states are desperately seeking NATO membership. The EU, the OSCE, and the United Nations were perceived to be subordinate re-



gional and international organizations vis-a-vis NATO. The dynamic in the Southern Caucasus was similar. Once politicians and the public realized that NATO was in fact assisting a separatist movement, enthusiasm for NATO actions subsided. However, that was never expressed in open complaints or disagreements over NATO actions, but rather in more subdued calls than usual for NATO's physical and political presence in the region.

Several positive developments for the region have come out of the NATO war in Yugoslavia. The anti-Serb stance of the international community has reinforced the message that the West does not necessarily limit itself to the protection and defence of non-Muslim communities. The FRY has been weakened to the point where it is no longer a major player in the region. Bosnian integration may benefit from that. In particular, the aftermath of the war and Kosovo Albanian atrocities against Serbs have shown that there are no "good guys" and "bad guys" in the Balkans. Both Serbs and Albanians can be victims and perpetrators.

The war has once again demonstrated that the Balkans are more often than not at the mercy of great power interests. It is time for South-East European countries to address their problems as a community and as a region, and to deal with conflicts and slate misconduct and failure (as in the case of Serbia) themselves, particularly if they want to avoid great power intervention. The region has to be careful about engaging NATO or other military and non-military organizations in the region. Once response mechanisms are triggered in these organizations, external involvement may take on its own dynamic that may easily turn out to be counterproductive to the peace and security needs of the region.

What may have been useful for the Kosovo Albanians may not at all apply to the Southern Caucasian context. It remains to be seen if any of the renewed attention directed at the Balkans will be extended to address the latent and protracted conflicts in the Southern Caucasus (and the Caucasus as a whole), or if that region will continue its existence at the margins of interest as far as the European and international communities are concerned.

Finally, a number of policy recommendations arise from this discussion. Under a new government Serbia should be encouraged to re-join the South-East European and European communities of states and regional and subregional organizations. An alienated and demonized Serbia should be avoided. However, the current Serb leadership should be discredited and international sanctions imposed. Only a new leadership committed to democracy, cultural tolerance, and regional integration and power-sharing should be supported by the outside world.

The new momentum for peace, security, and stability in the Balkans should embrace the Southern Caucasus. The Southern Caucasus must be included in a South-Eastern European Stability Pact. Community-building between Christian and Muslim communities should be a high priority (and could set standards worldwide). Regional integration, confidence-building, early warning and conflict prevention, and development should be the main foreign policy goals throughout South-Eastern Europe, both within the Balkans and the Southern Caucasus, and between those two regions.

*Appendix: Responses to the Kosovo crisis in the Southern Caucasus.*

In each Southern Caucasian country the public reacted differently to the situation in the Balkans. For the purpose of this analysis, 10 experts in Southern Caucasian countries were asked anonymously to fill out a chart of the general/prevaling perceptions in their respective societies of the major players in the Kosovo crisis during NATO's air strikes.

Player	Very negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very positive	No idea
NATO					+	
United States					+	
Russia	+					
Serbs		+				
Albanian Kosovars/ KLA						+

Albania						+
Milosevic	+					
NATO member countries of EU				+		
United Nations			+			
Western mass media					+	

Player	Very negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very positive	No idea
NATO	+					
United States	+					
Russia				+		
Serbs				+		
Albanian Kosovars/ KLA						+
Albania						+
Milosevic			+			
NATO member countries of EU		+				
United Nations			+			
Western mass media	+					

### THE CHOICE OF PLAYERS

The set of major players was intended to represent the objective balance of forces in the region. A player had to be a sufficiently autonomous actor (in this context it made little sense to include the Commonwealth of Independent States as a separate entity from Russia). On the other hand, Milosevic had to be a separate player from the Serbs, because they were not identified in public perception as one and the same. It should be noted that not all of the

players were of equal significance to the target group. The inclusion of Western mass media as a player reflects the fact that they are perceived as an autonomous power in world politics and their role in covering the crisis and forming public opinion.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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2000

# 2001

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## ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICT, INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

### INTRODUCTION

Sources of social and ethnic tension in Georgia can be understood from a geographic perspective and a sectoral perspective. From a geographic perspective, the greatest tensions are seen in parts of the country outside the Government of Georgia's jurisdiction, in post-conflict zones such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Samachablo. In addition, some regions have political disputes with the central government, such as the Ajara Autonomous Republic bordering Turkey. Potential conflict zones are the Javakheti regions bordering Armenia and Turkey and the Pankisi Canyon bordering Chechnya. Potential sources of conflicts are areas in which the population is predominantly composed of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and/or ethnic minorities.

According to the second sectoral approach, sources of tension are determined by factors such as the country's limited territorial in-

tegrity as a result of conflict and a large number of IDPs. The severe social and economic situation, high unemployment, the weakness of governmental structures, corruption, and the incidence of human rights violations also create tension. By categorizing these factors, we can derive a system of indicators that can serve as the basis for situation monitoring in various regions and urban areas.

“Frozen” conflicts are no longer a matter of great concern. According to recent sociological surveys, it appears that the Abkhazia problem is no longer a matter of critical concern in Georgian society<sup>1</sup>.

2001

### **SOURCES OF SOCIAL TENSION CORRUPTION**

Corruption, along with the country’s territorial integrity and the return of the IDPs, are the most serious problems in Georgia today. The problem of corruption has affected nearly all spheres of society. According to the data from several international organizations, Georgia is one of the ten most corrupted countries of the world.

Corruption in Georgia has its roots in the Soviet period, especially in the 1960s, but the scope of corruption has widened since independence, for with the collapse of the Soviet Union the few existing, though inefficient, control mechanisms of the Communist Party disappeared. New control mechanisms have not been created. During the first years of independence, when anarchy and chaos affected the entire country, corruption served as a stabilizing factor, creating a minimal system of dynamics in trade and employment. It soon became a major source for the current economic and social crises, and an obstacle to the development of the country’s economy. The most corrupt sectors are police, tax inspection, customs, the state institutions involved in the existing energy crisis, and organizations involved in international loans. At this point, the corruption of these institutions hardly surprises or outrages the population.

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<sup>1</sup> Haroutyunian, Ludmila, George Khutsishvili, Larisa Lemberanskaya and Joan Drake (eds.) 2000. *Research on the Prospects of South Caucasus Integration*.

There are important cultural and psychological aspects of corruption, in addition to the familiar economic issues. First, it is disastrous that government officials' corruption, according to one empirical survey, has become an integral part of their role in society<sup>1</sup>. Second, it is assumed that government officials and other high-ranking citizens are "entitled" to unofficial income. Often people claim that it is greediness, not overall corruption, driving some to demanding bribes that are more than is considered "fair". Currently, it is more profitable to work for government institutions than to work in business; many businessmen have chosen to abandon their business activities to assume "profitable" positions in government.

This situation reflects a Georgian mentality: a short temporal horizon and orientation to the present, a low level of professional discipline, a lack of entrepreneurial skills, and a minimal awareness of law.

### **SOURCES OF SOCIAL TENSION AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES**

The main source of social tension is the state's inability to perform its obligations. This includes the late payment of salaries and pensions, the cut-off of finances to certain industries, the inefficient supply of power, natural gas and water. Spontaneous protest actions are frequent and regularly covered by media. Blocking important roads has become a new Georgian tradition for an expression of protest. The irritated population most frequently addresses their problems to corrupted members of the government, the governing party, and the president. The president is frequently accused of being responsible for the current situation in Georgia, and the state is held responsible for not taking steps against relatives of the president suspected of leading the energy-sector Mafia.

To respond to the population's protest actions, the government authorities visit the sites of protest and enter into negotiations,

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<sup>1</sup> This has been demonstrated in an empirical survey by G. Nizharadze et al., Survey on Psychological Bases of Corruption in Georgia.

making promises and occasionally making short-lived improvements in conditions. The most serious protest action taken by the citizens was closing down of the central street in Tbilisi district Vake in November 2000, demanding 24-hour energy supply. Many public and political figures participated in the demonstration. The demonstration has caused serious worries in the government, as District of Vake is the home of many intellectuals, the electorate of the leading party and the President himself, people that have significant influence over the general public.

### REGIONAL TENSION

Ajara and several regions of Samegrelo (also known as Mingrelia), as well as Javakheti, are potential sources of destabilization.

**Ajara.** The Autonomous Republic of Ajara was formed during the Soviet period based on religious difference (Ajarian Muslims are Georgians). The leader of post-Soviet Ajara, Aslan Abashidze, created an authoritarian regime in the region, and his politics are pro-Russian, contrary to the political orientation of the central government. Abashidze is closely collaborating with Russian military; for example, there is a Russian military base in Ajara. He controls the incomes received from Ajara's customs, which becomes a subject of confrontation and sometime open conflict with the central government. Abashidze is the leader of the largest opposition alliance, the "Democratic Revival Union".

**Samegrelo (Mingrelia).** This region hosts the greatest number of refugees from Abkhazia and followers of Georgia's ex-president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who is of Mingrelian origin, so a large portion of population is against the current government. The region has several groups scattered in the woods, led by Eliava, a leader of the 1998 uprising, fighting against the current government. Eliava was killed in 2000 in a fight with police and this incident has caused serious problems in the region. Currently, the "forest brothers" do not pose an immediate threat, but they remain potential instigators



of violent conflict. As Samegrelo borders Abkhazia, armed conflicts occur frequently.

### ETHNIC GROUPS IN GEORGIA

On Georgia's 69,700 square meters, the population, according to 1989 data, was 5,400,800, represented by the following nationalities:

*Table 1. Ethnic Composition of the Population of Georgia (1989)*

	Population	Percent of Total
Georgians	3,787,400	70.1
Armenians	437,200	8.1
Russians	341,200	6.3
Azeris	307,600	5.7
Ossetians	164,100	3.0
Greeks	100,300	1.8
Abkhazians	95,900	1.8
Ukrainians	52,400	1.0
Kurds	33,300	0.6
Jews	24,600	0.5
Belorussians	8,600	0.2
Others	48,200	0.9
Total	5,400,800	100

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Independence in Georgia, the demographic situation in Georgia has significantly changed. The rate of migration has increased and Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Samachablo, two autonomous regions that belonged to Georgia during the Soviet period, are no longer under the jurisdiction of Georgia (for this reason the following information is calculated excluding the population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Samachablo). The Demographic Yearbook of Georgia<sup>1</sup> includes an

<sup>1</sup> G. Tsuladze, N. Maglaperidze 2000. Demographic Yearbook of Georgia. Center for Social Studies. Tbilisi, Georgia. p. 80.

ethno-demographic description of Georgia summarized below in Table 2.

*Table 2. Ethno-Demographic Composition of Georgia (2000 estimate)*

	Population	Percent of Total
Georgians	3,115,000	83.9
Armenians	227,000	5.6
Russians	90,000	2.2
Azeris	200,000	4.9
Ossetians	40,000	1.0
Greek	22,000	0.5
Abkhazians	2,000	0.05
Ukrainians	15,000	0.4
Kurds	18,000	0.4
Jews	6,000	0.1
Belorussians	2,000	0.05
Others	34,300	0.9
Total	4,041,300	100

2001

## **BACKGROUND ON ETHNIC CONFLICT IN INDEPENDENT GEORGIA**

Georgia has always been a poly-ethnic country, which creates the threat of conflicts. In spite of this fact, Georgia has never experienced serious ethnic conflicts, with the exception of the Abkhazia conflict after the declaration of independence in 1918 and in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Soviet Union was about to collapse. In addition, during the presidency of Gamsakhurdia, some cases of threatening and discrimination of the non-Georgian population took place, which led to extensive migration. Recently the situation has improved and migration has reduced. However, human rights protection organizations have observed cases of discrimination and human rights violations based on nationality.

For several years a group of nationalists (see discussion below on “Jehovah’s Witnesses”) have been trying to introduce a law in Parliament which would add citizens’ ethnicity to the information

listed in Georgian passports. Open discussions of this issue are periodically held in the mass media, coinciding with the worsening of the economy. The new Parliament, like the former one, is postponing their decision on this legal issue and is clearly avoiding a final decision. This is a significant problem that could result in ethnic discrimination and conflict, particularly because the vast majority of the population is in favor of adding nationality into Georgian passports. The government periodically returns to this subject to shift public attention from the economic crisis to the issue of ethnicity.

All national minorities in Georgia, including the Polish and German minorities, have created non-governmental organizations (NGO), which are generally active. There are also several NGO unions created by national minorities.

Armenians – Armenians are scattered throughout Georgia, both in cities and villages. Groups of Armenians live in regions of Tsalka, Tetrtskaro and Javakheti, and there are villages in other regions of Georgia fully or partially represented by Armenians. Traditionally, vast numbers of Armenians have lived in the capital.

Currently, the greatest concern with regard to potential conflict is in the region of Javakheti. Armenians make up the majority of the population in Javakheti (at least 92 percent) and Javakheti, one of the poorest regions of Georgia, is fully oriented towards neighboring Armenia in its trade, cultural relationships, etc. As a region, it is very isolated from the rest of Georgia, and the Armenian population does not identify themselves with Georgia. Local government officials are mainly Armenian, and the central government avoids intervention in local decision making to prevent tension. Conflicts with non-Armenian minorities in the region (Georgians, local Ajarians, and Russian Dukhobors) are frequent, and nationalistic attitudes are strong. The local population, including Armenians and Georgians, are actively opposed to the repatriation of Meskhetian Turks (see below). The vast majority of the population is employed by the Russian military base, and the central government's decision to close the base has created an additional concern for the local population.

Azeris – Most Azeris live in villages of the Kvemo Kartli Region (Bolnisi, Marneuli, Gardabani), in the suburbs of Tbilisi, and villages of Kakheti. The situation is stable, except for some minor incidents related to religion and community matters (see “Jehovah’s Witnesses”). In regions most densely populated by Azeris, the local government is mostly Georgian, but this has not created any dispute.

Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians – These groups are scattered throughout Georgia, and reside in both towns and villages. They generally reside in the vicinity of the Russian military bases, as they are mainly Russian military and members of their families. The Russian population is also represented by Dukhobors. Conflicts with these communities have not been observed.

Ossetians – Before the ethnic conflict, many Ossetians were living throughout Georgia, both in South Ossetia/Samachablo Autonomous Oblast and outside its borders. In the very beginning of the conflict, most of them left Georgia. However, in the last few years the process of return has started and continues today. Ossetians reside mainly in the villages of Lagodekhi region and Borjomi, and a small number lives in Pankisi Gorge. Serious conflicts with local populations have not been observed.

Jews – Jews were one of the first ethnic groups to settle in Georgia. The relationships of Georgians and Jews are traditionally positive. The Jewish population is generally integrated throughout big cities.

Greeks – Greeks mainly reside in the region of Tsalka and Batumi. A very high migration rate is observed.

Kurds – Most Kurds live in Tbilisi and are loyal to Georgia and Georgian government.

Meskhethian Turks – Meskhethian Turks are Muslims originally from the South Georgian region of Javakheti. Their ethnic origin is not clear, but most consider themselves Turks (belonging to the society “Vatan”). Around 45,000 of them identify themselves as ethnic Georgian (belonging to the organization “Hsna” or Liberation”). Scientists have also not agreed on their origin.

In November 1944, about 100,000 Meskhetian Turks were deported to Middle Asia and Kazakhstan. In the first month, 30 percent died due to weather conditions and disease. In the 1960s, the issue of return of Meskhetian Turks, as well as the issue of other nationalities deported in the Stalinist period, became an issue of discussion. However, this issue is still not decided. In the 1970s, many Meskhetian Turks moved to Azerbaijan and North Caucasus, and some of them remained in Middle Asia. Serious conflict took place in the end of 1980s between Meskhetian Turks and Uzbeks in the district of Fergana Valley, the first ethnic conflict that happened during the presidency of Gorbachev. As a result of this conflict, several thousand Meskhetian Turks moved to Azerbaijan, North Caucasus and Turkey, but not to Georgia.

Georgia has accepted its obligation to solve the issue of repatriation of Meskhetian Turks within 12 years as a condition of entry to the Council of Europe. However, no progress has been seen up to now in the repatriation of these 200,000 to 300,000 people (sources differ on the total number to be repatriated). The general public is opposed to the return of the Meskhetian Turks to their original residence, especially the Armenian population of Javakheti. The Government's position is to settle Meskhetian Turks in different regions of Georgia once the problem of the return of IDPs from Abkhazia is solved. Meskhetian Turks wishing to return to Georgia demand the right to settle in their historical place of residence.

Most of the Meskhetian Turks who have returned to Georgia believe they are of Georgian origin. Currently, about 500 Meskhetian Turks families live in two or three villages in the Imereti region and about 200 students study at higher educational institutions of Tbilisi and live in the dormitories. Some have moved to Javakheti region, where they face a tense situation with local population. For example, people have broken the windows of the houses bought by Meskhetian Turks.

Other ethnic groups – Other ethnic groups living in Georgia do not create the threat of conflicts, with the exception of a group of about 2000 Dagestanis of different ethnic origin (Avars, Lezgins,

etc.) who live in the village of Tiva in Kvareli region. They prefer to be isolated from the Georgians living around them, and rare interactions turn into conflict.

## RELIGION

The Georgian Orthodox Church, led by the Patriarch (currently the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II), has the majority of followers in the country. The Georgian Constitution sets forth grounds for freedom of confession, but “acknowledges the outstanding role of Orthodox Church in the history of Georgia”. Even though this phrase does not refer to any restrictions on religious groups, it may be interpreted in a broader sense in the future, giving a privilege to the Orthodox Church and thus restricting other groups’ worship. No other religious entity is mentioned in the Constitution. On this basis, the Georgian Orthodox Church has been demanding the state sign a constitutional agreement that would determine the interdependence of the church and the state. The legal status of this agreement would be higher than that of international legal documents. Several arguments are used to support this demand, particularly that if the status of this document is lower than that of the international documents, then in any agreement Georgia enters with the Vatican the status of Pope will be higher than the status of the Georgian Patriarch. The Church does not accept the possibility of this inferior status.

In the last ten years, fundamentalism has gotten stronger in the Georgian Orthodox Church. It is important that in 1970-1980s, the situation was completely different. The Georgian Church was actively involved in the activities of World Council of Churches, and Ilia II was the chairman of this organization. Discussions on religious subjects were held between the Orthodox Church and Catholics (“Baptists”), and Catholics were allowed to participate in the Mass held at the Orthodox Church. They also were allowed to hold Catholic Mass at Sioni Cathedral once a week; in 1974, Ilia II and Vatican Cardinal John Villedenbrance held a joint Mass at the Cathedral. Ilia

He himself attended Mass in Vatican at St. Peter's Cathedral in 1980 and blessed the church and people.

After the Georgian declaration of independence, the situation has changed, as nationalist and messianic tendencies grew stronger and the active fight against sectarianism and ecumenism began. Orthodox Christians are now prohibited to participate in the religious events of the Catholic Church, as was allowed in the past. The Georgian Orthodox Church is no longer a member of the World Council of Churches. The most conservative representatives of the Church have requested that the Church terminate evangelic relationships with the churches that remained in the Council. Patriarchy did not agree on this, as a result the above mentioned group has left the holy church. The same steps were taken by a more liberal group, the "Boston Group", which has close contacts with American Orthodox Church.

The Patriarchy has finally closed the doors of the church to the ultra-fundamentalist priest Basil Mkalavishvili. Mkalavishvili has from 200 to 400 followers. He demands that the Orthodox religion be declared as the State religion and remove all sectarians. He is especially aggressive towards followers of Jehovah's Witnesses. Mkalavishvili's group has participated several times in organized protests against followers of this religion, and on October 17, 1999 they used force against Jehovah's Witnesses during a gathering, burned all of their religious literature, and bit people (16 were hospitalized). Mkalavishvili personally shaved the head of one of the Jehovah's Witnesses. While the police actively participated when Mkalavishvili was thrown out of the Didube church, they did not show any interest in this incident, and a lawsuit regarding this incident is now stuck in the state bureaucracy.

Generally, state administration officials support the Orthodox Church, sometimes at the expense of discrimination of other religions, and consider this to be part of the country's policy.

Russian Orthodox Church – Currently there are two active Russian churches in Georgia, both in Tbilisi. These churches are under

the governance of Georgian patriarchy (in the same manner as the Georgian Churches in Moscow and St. Petersburg are governed by the Russian Patriarchy). The relationship between Russian and Georgian orthodox churches are normal and stable, although from time to time the issue of religious items exported from Georgia becomes the subject of discussion. Also, it is still remembered that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century many frescos in Georgian churches were whitewashed or covered with Russian frescos.

Catholics – Catholicism in Georgia has a long history. The first Franciscans came to Georgia in 1230. Catholicism became popular in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries in western Georgia. The popularization of this religion has not caused any conflict. Around 50,000 Georgians are Catholics, mostly in the big cities (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi). There are also several Catholic villages, mainly in Javakheti.

Several thousand followers of the Assirian Catholic church also live in Georgia. They are Assirians and live mainly in Tbilisi or in the village of Kanda the district of Kaspi. They hold Mass in one of the Catholic churches in Tbilisi.

The relationships between Catholic and Orthodox churches for the past ten years have become tense as a result of the position taken by the Orthodox Church, but there have been no open conflicts between this two religious groups. The only serious incident occurred when the Nuncius of Vatican was forced out of the country during the presidency of Gamsakhurdia. It is important to underline that the visit of the Pope John Paul II had a great resonance in Georgia.

Evangelist Christians-Baptists – The Georgian Union of Churches of Evangelist Christians-Baptists has around 18,000 followers, and owns around 60 churches and 70 religious buildings. The Archbishop Malkhaz Songulashvili leads this union. Unlike other countries, the Georgian communities of Baptists and Evangelists are united. At the end of 1980s, when nationalism in Georgia was growing rapidly, Baptist religious places of worship were torn down by Orthodox



Christians. The relationship with the Georgian Church is currently very tense.

Armenian Gregorian Church – Most Armenians living in Georgia belong to the Armenian Church, except for a small number of Catholic Armenians. As Gregorian churches belong to ethnically based religious groups<sup>1</sup>, this does not carry any threat for the Georgian Orthodox Church, so the relationship between these two churches is normal. However, there has been some discussion with regard to Church property.

Dukhobors – This is a Russian religious group exiled by the government of the Russian Tzar to the Caucasus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They settled in the Southern Georgia region of Javakheti, where they created isolated agricultural communities. After the declaration of independence in Georgia, nationalist propaganda, in addition to conflicts with the local Armenian population, led to the return of many Dukhobors to Russia, a process that continues. Currently, only 1000 Dukhobors are left in the Javakheti region, in the village Gorelovka.

Jehovah's Witnesses – This religion originates in America and is growing very quickly in Georgia. Two official organizations are registered in Georgia, the "Union of Jehovah's Witnesses" and the "Georgian Representation of Pennsylvania's Watchtower". The Jehovah's Witnesses state that they have more than 43,000 Georgian members, but experts estimated the number to be between 25,000 to 30,000. Jehovah's Witnesses missionaries' activities are mostly conducted in rural areas, and their following has grown, especially in Samegrelo and Kvemo Kartli.

Because of the significant growth of the Jehovah's Witnesses, this group has a negative image in the eyes of the Georgian Church and other groups. The Georgian Church considers them its most dangerous competitor and is thus actively involved in propaganda against them. However, the groups that were thrown out of the

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<sup>1</sup> S. Subari. 2000. "Religious Minorities in Georgia", *Media Caucasica*. No. 5-6, pp. 88-94.

Orthodox Church are especially aggressive towards Jehovah's Witnesses, physically abusing them (see the section above on Mkalahvili's group).

Recently, Muslims have taken steps against Jehovah's Witnesses. On September 16, 2000, a group of Azerbaijani Muslims in Marneuli have illegally entered the office of the Jehovah's Witnesses and destroyed religious literature. Some politicians have joined these religious fundamentalists. Guram Sharadze has filed an appeal to the court accusing of "anti-national and anti-state activities" and requested the cancellation of their registration. This court hearing has caused a great deal of discussion on television and other media sources. The court has declared the activities and organization of Jehovah's Witnesses to be legal, and cleared them of any charges. As the response to this decision, Sharadze has addressed a higher legal institution, the Supreme Court.

The propaganda against Jehovah's Witnesses has been effective, at least in Georgian cities. The public opinion polls have shown that a majority of the population in Tbilisi supports the prohibition of the Jehovah's Witnesses' activities<sup>1</sup>.

Jewish – Jews have lived in Georgia for a very long time, and have never faced anti-Semitism or any ethnic conflicts. Most Georgian Jews left Georgia in the mid 1970s. According to the representative of the Synagogue, the number of religious Jews in Georgia at the moment is not more than 4,000.

Muslims – The followers of this group are Azeris living in Georgia, Georgian Muslim Ajaris, and small ethnic groups of north Caucasian origin, mainly Dagestanis and "Kists" (or Georgian Chechens). It is difficult to determine the exact number of Muslims in Georgia, but it is estimated at approximately 300,000. Azeris are equally divided into two groups, Shiites and Sunnis; no conflicts have been observed between these two groups. There are few fundamentalist tendencies in Georgian Muslims, with some exceptions as described below.

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<sup>1</sup> Survey performed by TV Rustavi-2.

About 8,000 Kist Muslims live in Pankisi Canyon bordering Chechnya. After the war in Chechnya, the fundamentalist emissaries have been actively involved in missionary work in this region, financing the construction of mosques and schools of "Vahabits". However, this financial support was cut off immediately after the act of kidnapping of Red Cross representatives in this region. Currently, there are few Vahabits in Georgia.

**Other Religious Groups** – In addition to the groups described above, there are several other small groups with fewer than 6,000 followers. These include Protestants: Lutherans, Pentecosts, Charismatics, etc. It is difficult to determine their exact following, as they are continually in the process of dividing and uniting. It is also necessary to mention Assirian-Nestorians that pray in Orthodox churches, as they do not have buildings for the religious cults. There are also several thousand Yezids (syncretistic religion includes Zoroastrism, Islam, Jewish and Christian elements).

Of non-traditional cults, several groups can be identified in Georgia: Krishna's Consciousness (around 200 followers) and Scientologists or Dianetics (100 followers). Several years ago Krishnaites were actively distributing religious literature, but these activities are no longer visible. In addition, the Georgian Orthodox Church insists that there are several illegal Satanist groups, but there is no proof that these groups exist.

Finally, a few months ago a young man was detained and accused of masturbation in the public place and he declared that he is a member of the Osho Rajnish Group. The police tried to accuse him of a series of killings in Rustavi (a town in which the bodies of raped and murdered girls were found), but they later cleared him of these accusations.

### **INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS)**

As a result of South Ossetia/Samachablo and Abkhazia conflicts, a large number of IDPs are living in Georgia, creating severe problems for the country. Some IDPs have settled with friends and rel-

atives, and others have been placed in hotels and sanatoriums in different parts of Georgia by the state. According to information provided by the Ministry of the Refugees and Placement, a total of 272,400 IDPs are registered in 2000. About 12,000 are refugees from the South Ossetia/Samachablo region, but the rest are from Abkhazia. The state has placed 117,106 in housing, and the remaining 155,204 live independently.

IDPs are in a critical financial and psychological state. Most of them have post-traumatic stress syndrome, and are often involved in conflicts with the local population. Given the limited budget, the government cannot provide sufficient financial support to the refugees. In government shelters, the IDPs are provided with financial assistance of 11 GEL a month and 50 kw of electric power at no cost. IDPs living on their own are entitled to 14 GEL. The “insecure” category (physically challenged, ill people, elderly people, families with more than two children, etc.) have received a Minister’s fund of 100,000 GEL; they have also received free insurance. IDPs have a right to use public transport for free. Local authorities are responsible for their funerals. In addition, IDPs receive all documentation such as passports and driving licenses free of charge, and their third level school-children are not charged state taxes. IDPs living in villages receive land for their temporary use, and local authorities also try to provide them with financial support and organize cultural events.

In the past three years, international humanitarian aid that had played an important role has been significantly reduced. Deputy Minister Lomaia states that IDPs live in especially bad conditions in Samegrelo region and Tskhaltubo in Imereti region.

Table 3 below includes data on IDPs in Georgia in those areas with more than 2,000 IDPs. While the breakdown of IDPs by age group is difficult, it is known that there are many different age groups among the IDPs, although many of the young generation have moved to Russia.

*Table 3. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Public and Private Housing*

City/town	Total-IDPs	Living in public shelters	Living in private homes
Tbilisi	89,790	37,277	52,513
Zugdidi*	62,124	28,121	34,003
Abasha*	3,427	743	2,684
Martvili*	4,226	268	3,958
Senaki*	12,288	6,520	5,768
Foti*	7,540	2,402	5,138
Tsalenjikha*	7,117	1,297	5,820
Jvari*	4,339	349	3,990
Khobi*	5,392	2,527	3,669
Chkhorocku*	4,833	1,164	3,669
Samtredia	3,125	1,186	1,939
Kutaisi	15,238	7,934	7,304
Tskaltubo	8,408	6,954	1,454
Borjomi	2,612	2,223	389
Gardabani	3,854	1,690	2,164
Rustavi	4,316	1,703	2,613
Gori	6,503	1,896	4,607
Batumi	3,305	1,996	1,309
Kobuleti	2,784	2,444	340

\* Samegrelo Region.

## REFUGEES

Around 7,500 refugees from Chechnya are registered currently in Georgia, of whom 4000 are women, 1,500 are men, varying in age from 16 and 60. Most refugees from Chechnya are concentrated in Pankisi, in the village Duisi of Kists (4,800) and Joko (2,150), while 380 Chechen refugees are now in Tbilisi. The Georgian government has assigned them the legal status of refugee, but it cannot provide any support. Foreign humanitarian aid is coordinated by UNHCR. No conflicts with the local population have been observed, but crime in Pankisi is worsening.

## GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS ENVIRONMENT

Many human rights violations are observed in Georgia, in particular committed by the police and government power structures. Several NGOs, as well as the parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, an initiative of the former chairwoman Elene Tevdoradze, are monitoring human rights violations. The institute of Ombudsman is weak and does not operate efficiently, and the opposition has observed many cases of violations of human rights based on the political opposition, but international observers have not proved these violations (see reports of Amnesty International, other organizations). Individuals known as political prisoners, who have been charged with different types of crimes, are mostly followers of the former president.

Cases of domestic violence and discrimination based on gender are rarely publicly discussed. This is attributable to several facts: this discussion contradicts the stereotype of the nation as having great respect for the family and women; discussion of these problems is against tradition; and it is not seen to be in the interest of the government.

The weakness of the state, widespread corruption, and the population's limited understanding of law seriously worsen the overall human rights situation. Since 1998 some schools, as an experiment, have adopted classes on human rights.

## CONCLUSIONS, APPROACHES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators of ethnic conflict – a well-developed indicators system and an empirical model for early warning of conflicts is given in the 1998 publication produced by the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, *The Empirical Model of Early Warning of Ethnic Conflicts in Georgia*. Based on the model described in the book, it would be possible to develop special indicator systems of the regional and municipal level.

The following basic indicators can be identified:

- Economic conditions;

- Social conditions;
- Relationship between center and regions;
- Cultural and psychological background;
- Level of corruption in state institutions;
- Number and living conditions of IDPs;
- Ethnic and religious minorities;
- Russian military bases;
- Level of urban sector development;
- Financial and human resources;
- Activities of foreign companies;
- Activities of international organizations.

The sources and factors of social and ethnic tension in the country have created severe crises that cannot be solved in the short run. It is necessary to plan and implement programs to facilitate greater citizen participation in governance and to increase public awareness of these problems. These steps should be taken on different levels, including programs in community development and education of the mass media. Monitoring and evaluation of the sources and factors of the social and ethnic tension is needed. It is also necessary to develop nationwide anti-crisis measures.

## WHAT FREEZES AND WHAT UNFREEZES CONFLICTS?

(The Case of the Georgian-Abkhaz Dispute)

by Dr. George Khutsishvili,

International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN)

International Conference in Bad Honnef, Germany 2002

# 2002

Global Fatigue about Regional Conflicts

Enormous protraction of conflicts that have been marked by humanitarian crises may kill the very hope for their peaceful settlement. Everybody refers to and discusses disputes like Georgian-Abkhaz or Karabakhi with a dual feeling of "this has to be helped, and urgently" and "nothing else can really be imagined to make things move". Everyone is tired of the unsolved disputes, on all sides, and nearly

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, International Conference, Bad Honnef, Germany 2002.

<http://sef-bonn.org/events/2000/kaukasus/khutsishvili.html>

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## WHAT FREEZES AND WHAT UNFREEZES CONFLICTS? (THE CASE OF THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ DISPUTE)

### GLOBAL FATIGUE ABOUT REGIONAL CONFLICTS

Enormous protraction of conflicts that have been marked by humanitarian crises may kill the very hope for their peaceful settlement. Everybody refers to and discusses disputes like Georgian-Abkhaz, or N.Karabakh with a dual feeling of "this has to be helped, and urgently" and "nothing else can really be imagined to make things move". Everyone is tired of the unsolved disputes, on all sides, and nearly everyone is convinced that what could have been tried was already tried on them. Is that really so?

*Details of Georgian and Abkhaz Picture of Reality*

*Video-Movie Effect in Conflict Perception*

In the year 2000 most Georgians still live in illusion that the tape of time can be rewound to the position before August 1992. The demands of the majority of people displaced from Abkhazia as a result



of the 1992/93 Georgian-Abkhaz war dwell on the assumption that their pre-war residency, property, and social status are restorable. The Georgian government's policy that has left intact all the pre-war Abkhazian structures now in exile, including an oxymoron like customs-in-exile, has reinforced this effect.

The very first illusion that the Georgian society will have to overcome is that quasi-cinematographic effect of a "rewindable" reality. "We understand justice as bringing us back to our homes from which we were forced to flee on September 27, 1993". This is so understandable from a human viewpoint, and so impossible in a given set of the laws of nature.

No doubt, IDPs have full right to return to Abkhazia, and if they so wish, to the towns they lived in, worked in, etc. The sooner it is realized that their return may happen only to a new and irreversibly changed reality to which they will have to adapt, the better for the prospect of conciliation and settlement.

### **THE ABKHAZ: A CAPSULATED COMMUNITY**

Among the recent years' most significant changes in most Georgians' perception of the Abkhaz is the realization that Abkhaz constitute a different ethnicity, whose claims of nationhood are substantiated. At the same time, many Georgians feel insulted and embittered by the radical Abkhaz stand, "we have not ever had anything in common with Georgians, neither ethnically nor culturally. They have tried to assimilate us through the history of our relationship. Now that we have won the war with Georgians, all we want them to do is to leave us alone. The sooner they understand it and give up whatever offers of settlement and models of reunification, the better. Only after that we may talk about reconciliation, and live like neighbors".

To Georgians, this does not sound like a rational basis on which a yet unrepresented nation should seek so needed recognition in its geopolitical environment. What they do not know is that there are more and more Abkhaz who would not really identify with this

radical stand, if not for the fear of masses of Georgian returnees getting back and making Abkhaz once again minority in their land.

### **THAT FREEZING LOOK BACK**

Involvement in a historical discourse looks like having a stimulating impact, but in the long run it has a freezing effect, as it creates gaps in understanding, stirs up emotions, and finally causes the communicants to break up communication. All the attempts to clear up, reconcile or merely describe historical picture of the disputed land have only complicated the dialogue between the parties, which has confirmed an old truth that discussion of history is better altogether avoided until the final stages of an (insh'allah!) successful dialogue. More and more Georgians start to realize that to have a slightest chance to rescue the prospect of agreement, the Abkhaz nationhood should be respected and bygones let be. However, the unavoidable retrospection has conditioned public consciousness on both sides to a dramatic extent, while historians remained to be publicly seen as major scholarly authority in trying to trace the roots of a shattered national identity.

2002

#### *On Terms Used and Contexts Meant*

##### *What is a Frozen Conflict?*

The following considerations may seem too general and unpractical, but they may help create a conceptual framework for more fruitful discussions.

“Frozen conflict” has lately become a widely used expression, the meaning of which has not yet been sufficiently defined or uniformly understood. Some considerations may be offered regarding the understanding of frozen conflicts based on the Abkhazia case, along with some tentative criteria of how to “unfreeze” them. “Freezing” is a characteristic relevant to a dynamics of conflict, characterized by a high level of inertia, when whatever efforts are done, nothing is likely to change. In frozen conflicts we usually see that: (a) the parties to conflict fail to promote negotiation while evincing distrust

to external mediation, (a) both sides demonstrate sustainability despite hardships, (b) communication level between the parties is insignificant, (c) confidence level between the parties is extremely low and does not have a tendency to rise, (d) there is a fragile neither-war-nor-peace situation in which (e) negotiations are periodically renewed but decisions are not achieved, and (f) public opinion on both sides is dominated by radicals while unfeasibility of military solution is also realized. Thus, we see that “freezing” more pertains to a stagnation stage in the development of protracted conflicts, after more or less intensive mediation and/or transformation efforts have proved unable to open any visible prospects ahead. A conflict cannot freeze at sharp turning points or ongoing hostilities, and even if a situation resembling freezing appears at a high-intensity stage of its development, then only shortly. Real freezing happens when high-intensity stage is usually already past, and a kind of fragile stability is reached causing outsiders to interpret it as a post-conflict stage/situation, and refer to the past-yet-renewable high-intensity stage as a conflict proper. Such a conflict/post-conflict distinction can be seen in many papers dedicated to the Abkhazian and Karabakhi conflicts.

### **“MOVERS” AND “FREEZERS”**

In a plethora of factors influencing the entire process of conflict development, there are factors that foster dynamism and feedback, even at the expense of destabilization (“movers”), and those that foster self-isolation, distrust, caution, non-doing, protraction (“freezers”), even as it evaporates the prospect of settlement. In special cases one and the same factor may appear as freezer or mover, and freezer/mover status of a factor can mutate with conflict development. (E.g. events in Gali region of Abkhazia in late May 1998 were intended by those who provoked them to act as a mover, but they actually turned a freezer, contributing significantly to the present state of conflict). Freezing of a conflict takes place when the impact of freezers much exceeds (dominates over) the

impact of movers. Let us focus on freezer/mover impact at a frozen stage of the conflict.

Movers are usually linked with realized interests and, very often, perceived internal threats; on the external side these are any-track diplomacy efforts, international obligations of the states, trade needs and obligations, regional economic and transportation projects, especially those involving disputed territories, etc.

Freezers are the sides' expressed positions and, often, perceived external threats underlying them, as well as intrinsic interests of political elite(s), nationalistic and conspiracy mindsets, high level of distrust and the relevant enemy, rigidity of the perceived dispute issue, popularity of radical/militant stands, etc. Freezers are elusive as they appear like pseudo-stabilizers, not only in conflict resolution field, but in many other areas freezing is often mistaken for stabilization.

Unexpected changes to the conflict environment – say, power vacuum, coup, or any major change in power structure – may break up the frozen stage catastrophically.

It can be seen that most objective factors of conflict development are movers, while most (not all!) subjective factors are freezers. It is hardly possible to point at any other conflict where subjective factors dominate so much as in the Georgian-Abkhaz one. Domination of subjective factors does not mean lesser gravity of situation, as subjective factors are no less crucial than objective (e.g. distrust is a subjective factor), and the conflict perception determines the picture of reality. However, settlement would most probably require overcoming of subjectivity in conflict perception and situation assessment on both sides, and development of what psychologists call the “internal locus of control”: the ability to assume responsibility and not to readdress it to a “third force”. At the same time, domination of subjective factors also contains hope, because they are human-caused, and therefore human-manageable.

Humanitarian intervention is a typical remedy that international players try on frozen conflicts.

Humanitarian intervention is undoubtedly a mover, but when international agencies implement it in a “balanced” manner, i.e. when the support comes indiscriminately and equally to all parties involved – including the stimulation of those who work for conciliation and those who manipulate the issue – this has a freezer effect.

Bureaucratic/structural interest of international organizations, or their affiliation to opportunistic and manipulative governments may as well be a strong freezing factor.

“When at a higher-intensity stage of conflict development a situation is reached that looks like freezing, it means that a certain occurred combination of freezers and movers has caused the conflict dynamics to come to a temporary halt. At a post-intensive stage freezing may mean that the conflict dynamics is going to, or may deteriorate without getting to settlement, or in a worst case, result in a renewal of hostilities or even a full-scale war”.

Furthermore, we need to distinguish between constructive and destructive movers.

However, similar distinction cannot be done for freezers, as they are naturally destructive. Active civic society is undoubtedly a constructive mover.

Some recommendations that immediately come to mind:

Identify freezers and movers in conflict dynamics, Distinguish constructive movers from destructive, Measure weights attached to each of the factors, Create a model, in which constructive movers determine the combination of factors influencing the conflict dynamics.

## **CONCLUSION**

We need to be as idealistic, as we need to be realistic, first, in trusting that democratic ideal in the Caucasus is feasible and viable, and second, in that there exist no unsolvable disputes and unmanageable/non-transformable conflicts, including the most complicated ones, like the Georgian-Abkhaz.

Understanding Fragmented Communities  
(A Perceptual Analysis of the Georgian Reality)

George Khutsishvili: kgeorge@iccn.ge

2002

*Lord, give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us.*

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Unpublished Manuscript, 2002.

prayer

The sphere of modern political and social practice looks like a multiple mirror game, in which you can never be sure where is the object and where

UNDERSTANDING FRAGMENTED  
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*Lord, give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us.*

*An old Scottish prayer.*

The sphere of modern political and social practice looks like a multiple mirror game, in which you can never be sure where is the object and where is its reflection. There is a special role played in this game by the mass media and by its sibling, mass mentality. The popular media reflect and reinforce the populist politics and mass world outlook.

In Kantian tradition, the world is always a perceived world. Moreover, there is not any world for us other than a perceived world, so perception itself loses meaning, as it presupposes “a thing to perceive”. Any *Ding an und fur sich* – in modern language – a virtual reality, which has seized to be virtual as soon as we realize that nothing can be conceived beyond it. Such a discourse may

essentially be plausible in one dimension – that of space – while in dimension of time the “objective” reality is historically constructed in such a way as to become verifiable and be called knowledge. From Protagoras’ denial of the “non-subjective” to Feyerabend’s agnosticism expressed as “denial of method”, human thought was from time to time trying to get rid of this dilemma by just stopping to think, but even in Wittgenstein’s cognitive discourse (incorporating this paradox into a logical framework and thus, putting “the beast” to work) the problem is only spectacularly highlighted, not really addressed. Edmund Husserl in early 20<sup>th</sup> century came closer than others to understanding phenomenal world(s), but his transcendental phenomenology failed to become a dominating cognitive scheme, if I may argue, because it led to risky reconsideration of basic beliefs and assumptions of modern social beings’ worldview.

We refer to “worlds” as ultimate constructs possible from the individual perspective, and to their projected parts, or “frames” as contexts for “understanding” other(s) worlds. According to Oscar Nudler, “Both “world” and “frame” refer to a set of assumptions or principles which enable us to structure situations”. Aldous Huxley called the individual human worlds “island-universes”, which he considered to be essentially incommunicable. “Sometimes the uniqueness is so deeply built-in that they may remain essentially closed to anyone else”. But again, any attempt of “closing the universe” explodes from the inside. “As soon as we become critical of the assumptions on which a world is based, we somehow step out of it, no matter how strongly we continue to believe in such assumptions”.

In humanities analysis is usually understood as conceptual analysis. Moreover, any analysis is understood as essentially conceptual, and this is true. It is also true that our analytical thought is very often drawn and directed by perceptions. Especially is this true with regard to political and social spheres where all objects of study are really *perceptual constructs* before they may become subject to any conceptualization. We are talking about some power group, or a leader, or some historical process meaning really their picture

created by ancient chronicles, or mass media, supporters or opponents, or just by an (un)fortunate set of circumstances. At the same time, it is also true that, pragmatically speaking, people are not interested so much in discovering an ultimate truth, as in the outcomes of their object of interest's activities that may have some influence on their lives.

In this piece I do not mean to indulge in a "hen or egg priority" game, nor will I reinvent a wheel by saying that a thinking being cannot even smell a flower without participation of grey cells of his/her brain. Quoting Nudler again, "a perceiver's world cannot be separated from the perceiver's preunderstandings of reality for the very reason that they contribute to his perception as such". I would rather mean the opposite: a thinking being cannot help perceiving while thinking, or *any objective (object-oriented) thinking is relative*.

Analysis is normally referred to and understood with regard to an author of that analysis. It is usually understood that any analysis bears a tint of subjectivity, as it has been made by a being living and thinking, and therefore limited in time, space and the structure of mind, not by God. A. A. Bachtin says that when two empirical ones converse, the third – a metaphysical one – is presupposed to exist (and virtually participates in conversation – G.K.). Relativity and limits are understood on each side, but both tacitly refer to a third side at a metaphysical distance who holds the ultimate truth.

Yet a lesser degree of detected subjectivity in an analysis contributes to a higher degree of its credibility. If we now consider concrete persons, groups, institutions, of which the analysis treats, they cannot all be attributed to an author's view: they rather appear as ready-to-use blends made by others or commonly known as such, and the more commonly are they recognized as such, the less doubt they usually incur. We all know how blood-thirsty or amiable may become an image of an historic character due to efforts of a famous historian or novelist. On the other hand, in modern age we very often consume images and depictions that mass media feed us with, especially if our expectations and idiosyncrasies are smartly guessed about, addressed and satisfied. Even in seriously



intended discourses, such as ratings, opinion polling and any sociological or other research where quantitative measurements prevail, a background “knowledge” about public characters involved plays a crucial role.

In Zulu the word “ubuntu” has a complex and versatile meaning, which can be expressed in English as “I am what I am because of you”. This “because” is an explanation, certainly not an accusation. Yet millions of people in the whole world prefer to consume an image without asking a question of why, because of what or whom is the image such and not different, as if to avoid what this analysis might reveal as a weak argument or prejudiced preassumption about the prototype, and thus bring discomfort to a consumer’s self-esteem.

*(Israeli scholars conduct a very important analysis of how Jewish people and Israel are described in the Arab countries’ school textbooks. Realizing well that would only be one side of the picture, they complement it by analysis of how Palestinians and other Arab groups are described in the Israeli textbooks. This is then followed by a comparative analysis).*

### RELATIVIZING AN OBJECT OF ANALYSIS

What we mean by an object *a* is really an asymmetric pair of objects (*a*, *b*). Nothing can be known or imagined of *a* without referring to some *b*, which has contributed to the perceived picture of *a*. Thus, if we want to learn *a* better, we better also learn *b*. Ideally, a gallery of characters that are objects of interest to a modern media consumer, should every time be complemented by a cast of other characters, *because of whom* the former are as they are. Of course, construction of *a* is a multiple effect of many ‘*b*’s, but we may make a justifiable assumption that this may be every time decomposed to a set of simpler relations (cf. Norbert Wiener).

Also, *b* may not necessarily be an object (person, group, institution), but it may be a structure of current (contemporary) lifeline (Fernand Braudel), against which we try to discover a new under-

standing of a person or its historic age. But the most spectacular result we get when contrasting a person with a person. And this is particularly relevant for the post-Communist Georgian community's mentality, personalizing all discourses, and reducing any other object processes to persons/personalities. A psychological mechanism of *projection* first described by Carl Jung shows very well the mechanism of personalization in Georgian mentality.

*Perceptual analysis* is an attempt to reduce complex phenomena of social life to relatively simple and easy to understand binary relations of "objects" (=atomic phenomena). Thus, *any person can be seen as an atomic phenomenon*. Basically, any complex phenomenon may be interpreted as directed (asymmetrical) pair of phenomena of lower degree, where the first is determined by the second. Another assumption is that, ideally, any qualitatively complex object of study may be represented as a set of interconnected quantitatively defined objects, thus making it possible to measure them, using some of the existing calculi.

Phenomenon  $P(a, b)$  – perception of an object  $a$  with regard to  $b$  – is a picture of an object  $a$  determined by  $b$ 's view of  $a$  (also determined by (binary) relation between  $a$  and  $b$ ).

Authors of analysis are expected to display as little subjectivity as possible when describing an object. It should also be a requirement for any analysis, especially including rating or comparison, to make references to those personal or impersonal sources of impact who influenced background picture(s) of the object of analysis used by an author. There should not be anything tolerated like "a common view of Mr.  $X$  is..." or "Mrs.  $Y$  is generally thought of to bear features such as...".

Statement 1: no relation between  $a$  and  $b$  is reflexive, or  $(a, a)$  is always different from  $(a, b)$  (therefore, no one can picture him/herself exactly as other pictures him/her). This is the first difficulty the socium creates, compared to other realms. Self-perception is always different from perception(s) of the same object. This makes the whole set of perceptions differentiated.

*Question: any phenomenon of a person, including leaders is a result of the interaction of multiple perceptions. Is it not an oversimplification to consider a binary pair?*

*Answer: In a political reality it is especially important to reveal in seemingly socially determined views and judgments personal/subjective drives and perceptions. A picture of one leader is very much determined by another' view of him/her, as his/her Significant Other, which is than spread as a more or less collectively generated picture. This subjective view is very often a projected view.*

*(This is actually resembling a classic philosophical dispute between metaphysics and dialectics. In communities like Georgian, any power group oriented to gain popular support, assumes a metaphysical position: they know and propagate the Truth, especially if they exploit the magic "national spirit" issue. Even if everyone understand this is a game, it nevertheless influences public opinion).*

### **POWER ANALYSIS AS A PERCEPTUAL ANALYSIS**

As a general *conceptual preassumption*, I assume a phenomenological world outlook: any object is a perceived object (=phenomenon). Accordingly, *noumenon* turns out to be an empty realm. As for *empirical preassumptions*, the object identified as "the Georgian society" is a culturally small group-determined, sociologically fragmented and psychologically disbalanced and discouraged community, at the same time having a complicated mentality and a high human potential.

I will attempt to redefine "interest groups", "power groups", "agents of influence", and other characteristics used in political/social studies in terms of perceptual analysis. This will also involve a semantical, and more generally, also other semiotical aspects.

Of all objects of political and social study I select those that can be understood as *power determinants*. Not the *factors* forming the socium as a perceived universe, but perceived *objects*, or phenomena themselves. *Quasi-determinants* are those used as names, but having no referents among objects.

(In an indicator-based or factorial analysis objects and determinants may be understood as indicators or factors).

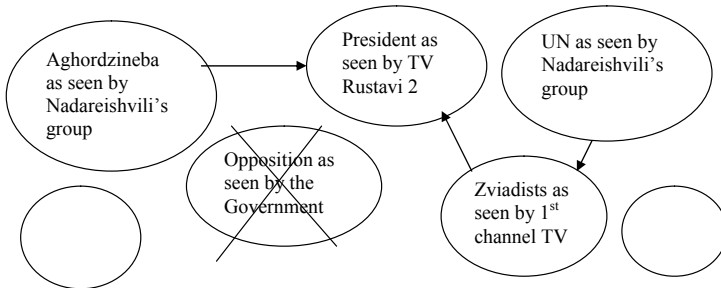
*Strategic Goals:*

- Create a valid picture of the Georgian political, cultural, social realm;
- Reveal the mechanisms of manipulation of the public opinion picture;
- Reveal the power-generating and power-maintaining mechanisms of the leaders; give relative power/potential measurements;
- Assess (de-)stabilizing effects on the overall society situation
- Give substantiated forecast of developments.

2002

We should eliminate some popularly used intuitive/verbal constructs (e.g. “*helisupleba*” [the establishment], “*opozicia*” [opposition], “*erovnulebi*” [patriotic forces], “*arasamtavroebi*” [non-governmentals]) from the analysis itself, leaving it for a different level of study, and for the moment qualify them as quasi-objects.

Dynamic set of major oppositions, gaining or losing priority in the course of time (Abashidze vs Nadareishvili; President vs Saakashvili; Nadareishvili vs UN Mission; TV Rustavi 2 vs President, etc.) should be distinguished from quasi-oppositions in which at least one is a quasi-object (e.g. President vs Opposition; Civil Society vs Government, etc.).



## SOME PHENOMENAL RELATIONS IN THE GEORGIAN SOCIETY

*Power chart* as a picture of an expanded object **a** (all objects influenced by **a**), or all objects that influence a derivative object **a**. Sometimes a power chart of influences may create a *virtual derivative object*, which may, however, in its turn, influence others.

*Statement 2.* Any atomic phenomenon has a power chart.

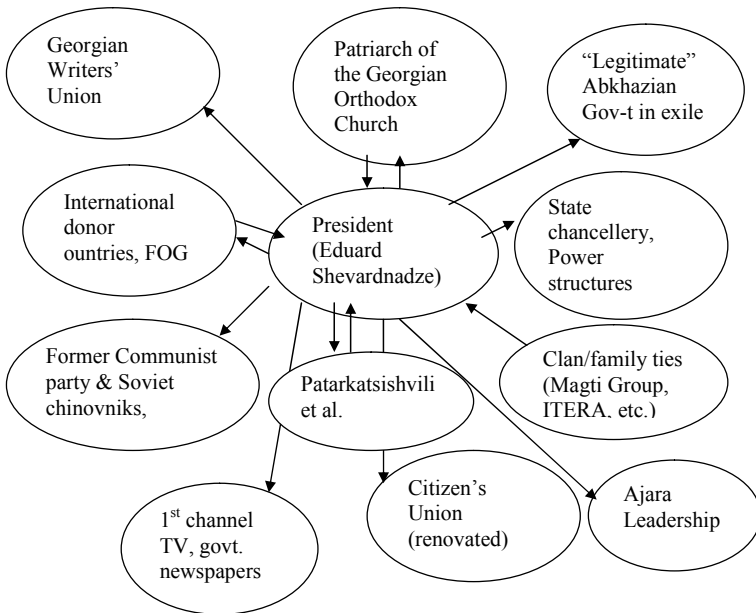
*Statement 3.* Power chart as a complex relation is decomposable into a set of binary relations.

(Power chart reveals a higher order perception, analyzable in terms of lower order perceptions).

Today's most spectacular opposition in the Georgian politics is Shevardnadze vs Saakashvili. Lower in line is Nadareishvili vs Abashidze.

As there are power groups behind each, we need to clarify a complex set of relations between the key member groups.

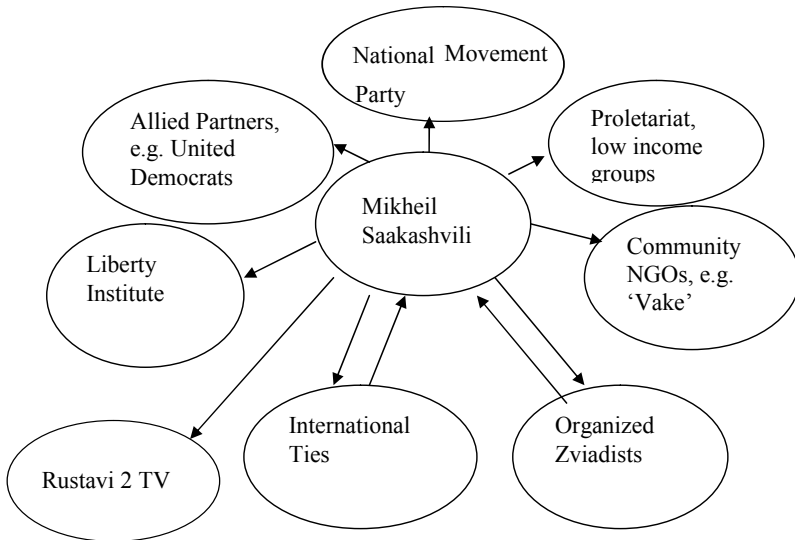
An opposition Eduard Shevardnadze vs Opposition cannot be understood correctly, unless we realise that Opposition is a quasi-ob-



ject (or quasi-determinant), and try to concretise it to real objects, e.g. Mikheil Saakashvili('s group), etc.

Eduard Shevardnadze's power chart clearly shows that this is an active determinant (there are more arrows starting from him, than ending on him). This is a power-generating phenomenon, having powerful mechanisms of self-consolidation.

Maintenance of power is also achieved in this case at the expense of manipulation of own power determinants by inspiring conflicts between them and making them more dependable, such as in Abashidze-Nadareishvili case. First Abashidze was given a token of an additional power status, as President's representative for resolving Georgian-Abkhaz dispute, than Nadareishvili was given a token to attack Abashidze as an anti-patriotic factor.



Mikheil Saakashvili's power chart shows this is an active determinant (fewer arrows ending on him, than starting from him), however, with fewer and weaker power-generating mechanisms than the President, but having a popular support.

A quantitative measure controlling the choice of references in a chart might be found in content analysis of the press.

Now let us imagine that Saakashvili's power chart is done by a person from the President's supported group. The objects/phenomena involved would be partly different.

*Socium understood as an environment for (or a universe of) phenomena.  
Perception of a socium is a cross-section of all opinion pictures of the socium.*

*A self-denying object (opposing to its perception as a determinant)*

*A self-boosting object.*

*Cross-perceptions (presuppose embracing vision?):*

*e.g. Internationals in Georgia vs Nadareishvili's group.*

*Perceptions chart related to a socium.*

Next stage would be getting from the *first* (between objects) to *second order* (between perceptions) analysis:

$P^2 (P_1, P_2)$  is a perception of a perceived object (i.e. as seen by someone)  $P_1$  by  $P_2$ .

Phenomena (power determinants):

*President;*

*"Zhvania-Saakashvili('s group)" is not an object, but the President's perception (alias "internal destabilising forces");*

*"Opposition" is a virtual object "Government's" perception, and vice versa Parliament (quasi-object);*

*Defence Minister (object, but no determinant, therefore dismissable);*

*Ajara Leadership (Agordzineba as extended Abashidze);*

*IDPs are a quasi-object;*

*Nadareishvili's group is part of IDPs;*

*NGOs are a quasi-object;*

*Civil Society is part of NGOs (in President's perception is an element of Zhvania-Saakashvili's power chart, as well as Rustavi 2);*

*International Community (in Georgia) .*

A Resulting Picture of the Georgian Socium

*Outcomes:*

*dominating mood;*

*norms and ideals;*

*the role of ideology;*

*controlled opinion picture and the role of media (TV);*

*external expectations;*

*internal (self-)expectations;*

*human potential measurements.*

2002



# 2002

Interview with George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, by Lilli Javakhia, Journalist, The Georgian Times, Weekly Newspaper, #030(1083), Monday, July 29, 2002.

## IDP HAS THE CHOICE: TO RETURN HOME OR STAY HERE

### International Center on Conflict a Negotiation Demands to reform the UN

**GT:** We would like to know your position about the statement of Heidi Tagliavini a new head of the UN Observatory Mission in Georgia. She stated that she would oppose to apply the Item 7 of the UN Charter in Abkhazia, according to which peace should be established by force.

**G.KH.:** I consider that it is difficult to expect some changes in the Abkhazian conflict adjustment in the nearest future. Unfortunately it will go on this way, as none of our demands — changing the mandate of peacekeeping force, bringing additional sanctions into action, — were met.

Heidi Tagliavini, who replaced Dieter Boden a German expert at this post, is optimistically minded to this issue, but it seems the reason of her optimism may be that fact that she arrived in Georgia not long ago and still has optimistic hopes.

We can not be hopeful as we know the whole history of these negotiations. The UN mandate says that the UN first of all strives to reach cease-fire agreement and this mandate does not say that the reconciliation process should be launched actively. Dieter Boden fell victim of this case also.

I don't think that Dieter Boden was a bad diplomat or negatively minded to Georgia. He was just forced in a that condition and he could not do anything.

The person on such position is not free and is predestined. Predestined because he works in such system that he has no possibility to exercise initiative and to show himself off.

**GT:** Do you think that Tagliavini can lose position taking such decision?

**G.KH.:** It is just a apolitical statement that will not bring any tangible results. It is an initiative that does not have any perspective.

**GT:** Do you oppose to establish peace in Abkazia by force?

**G.KH.:** No. I really don't. I don't think that Russian peacekeeping forces' presence in Abkhazia can be positive. They are pro-Abkazian forces. They are one-sided forces.

If the Russian peacekeeping forces are changed with the international ones and they will not include only a Russian component, but other more or less neutrally-minded forces, then the this item 6 should be applied. We should not do it when only Russian peacekeepers are deployed in the conflict zone.

**GT:** If it should be done, why does not Georgia carry out this intention?

**G.KH.:** Because there are many factors that hinder this intention. There are different forces in the conflict zone where peace keeping forces are deployed. There Abkhazian "*boeviks*", Georgian guerrillas, Abkhazian "*militsia*" that more or less controls this territory.

**GT:** Are these groups interested in facilitation of keeping stability in this strip?

**G.KH.:** Proceeding from their purposes they are interested to disrupt the stabilization. At the same time there are some uncontrolled gangs, that have their aims too. E.g. I have talked with the Georgian guerillas many times who stated: “We should not admit the peaceful process to develop, because we will fail to reach our goal. We aim to take revenge on Abkhazians and gain it back by force”. In this sense any stabilization hampers our goals.

In these conditions it will be able difficult to carry out any police operation or function in this territory.

**GT:** How would you evaluate the activity of UN Mission in Abkhazian conflict adjustment?

**G.KH.:** The UN Mission is too passive. The reason is the somewhat bureaucratic structure, that in many states that facilitate to stagnate the post-conflict situation i.e. it does not foster the conflict adjustment. Proceeding from the UN statue, the UN should promote those initiatives that will serve the common interests. That will overcome this stagnation and an agreement will be reached on the cardinal issues such as: defining status of Abkhazia within Georgia’s jurisdiction, the IDPs problem to return to Abkhazia and some others.

According to UN charter initiations that reveal joint interests, steps towards conflict resolution and that help achieve agreements on IDPs returning must be actively supported. The UN does not work on these issues but on conflict planning.

**GT:** What’s the reason and the way out of it?

**G.KH.:** The reason is a bureaucratic system of UN. UN should be reformed and the donor countries must finance UN only in case UN accepts those reforms.

**GT:** How can the problem of IDPs be resolved?

**G.KH.:** We must consider it in real terms. We all wish, and absolutely fairly, the IDPs returned to their homes that will solve lots of problems. The matter here is restitution and compensation.

**GT:** Do you think that after ten years of being IDPs people will return to Abkha zia?

**G.KH.:** On the one hand we have got lots of IDPs demanding on their returning to their houses, but on the other hand we have got bitter reality meaning all will not be able to do so even if Georgian jurisdiction restores in Abkhazia. The most difficult task in this conflict-resolution process will be returning IDPs to their homes at the same time not violating human rights. The main obstacle being that such problem is not on agenda while negotiating with Abkhazians. Elder people who remember well the life there will return will pleasure but younger generation's case will be more difficult since they have new spheres of interests. However, I do know the mood of IDPs and that they will go back as soon as some real chance appears. But if Abkhazian problem is not settled in short time such mood will soon change. The more time passes the less the percentage of people willing to return to Abkhazia. That is why the government must find some way out, but this way must not be a military invasion.

Even if we have strong military potential this will not enable us return to Abkhazia. Power factor is important but such method does not mean situation will be stabilized there and IDPs will peacefully return. On the contrary, this will cause criminalisation of the whole region, endless guerilla warfare and Russia's game against Georgia. Georgia may even be declared aggressor with awful results for her. That is why I exclude military seize-over of Abkhazia. State might does her best to influence other state by political and not military methods in trying to reach some agreement.

**GT:** If agreement cannot be reached?

**G.KH.:** Then we have an alternative; either negotiations, without results as it now happens, or military invasion. However, neither of those two will return Abkhazia so we must not remain with only those alternatives. The third way is society's request that the government find the relevant way out or abdicate.

**GT:** What do the NGOs and governmental organizations do to improve economic and social life of IDPs?

**G.KH:** Considerable humanitarian aid was allocated to Georgia in the past but due to corrupt statesmen a little aid achieved final destination. The aid considerably decreased in recent years. International politics has switched to development programmes from humanitarian aid.

**GT:** Have IDPs got any rights, or are their rights protected?

**G.KH:** Disputes have been on for years concerning UN's new approach to IDPs issues. A new position was established at UN secretary; High Commissar on IDPs (refugees in the past). IDPs and refugees were once of identical meaning but today IDPs are those that haven't left the territory of their country as a result of any conflict. It was said in the new approach that we shall employ and educate people being in bad economic and social conditions.

Abkhazian legitimate government, IDPs and related organizations stated that in case they have the same living conditions and rights as the local population they will lose incentives to go back to Abkhazia. Abkhazian legitimate government thought of those offers as of a secret plan of UN to create good conditions for IDPs here and destroy the will to return to Abkhazia. According to such logic one must hold IDPs in unbearable conditions not to lose incentives to return home. This is not a fair and normal approach to the issue. The IDPs may choose to return to Abkhazia or to stay here. Such approach must not generate one's disgrace.

# saakashvili's strategic misstep

Why did not the revolution take place in Georgia?

# 2003



Interview with George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), by Khatuna Kviralashvili, Journalist, The Daily Georgian Times, Tbilisi, Georgia, 13 November, 2003.

## SAAKASHVILI'S STRATEGIC MISSTEP WHY DID NOT THE REVOLUTION TAKE PLACE IN GEORGIA?

A Q&A with the Director of the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), George Khutsishvili in reference to the latest developments in Georgia.

**GT:** What turn do you think the political developments may take in Georgia?

**G.KH.:** In my judgment, situation has transformed into a strategic game with no way out. However, it might have been designed this way at the very beginning.

**GT:** What do you mean?

**G.KH.:** Mikheil Saakashvili expected that tension would hit its climax and scores of people would take to the streets. Saakashvili hoped that the processes would have beneficial outcome for him but the leader of the National Movement failed to mobilize enough resources of people. The present situation suggests he is unlikely to attain his objective.

**GT:** That is, Saakashvili's plan is a failure...

**G.KH.:** Well, when a situation enters stalemate, a leader should be ready to make changes to ways leading to his objective. But I don't see Saakashvili is doing so. Without proper changes, this process will not be successful for the opposition leaders, and all these designs will fall through. Unless something changes, people who expressed support to the opposition and made a sacrifice to it, will be strongly disappointed. Hence, the opposition leaders should promptly map out a strategic plan thus changing the situation to their benefit. They are to meet the hopes of so many people who are marching through the streets to shout their support to the opposition.

**GT:** Specifically, what should they do?

**G.KH.:** For instance, they should file more suits to the courts and seek legal ways to prove their stance right and their victory in the elections legally grounded.

**GT:** They could have chosen this way from the very beginning but they actually turned to different means...

**G.KH.:** Right, they could, but I don't think it is too late to do so now.

**GT:** Don't you think they will find it very difficult to shift to legal ways when they are already stuck in the current situation?

**G.KH.:** Yes, It might be a bit difficult but when people trust you, you are to do something. Otherwise, people's attitude may turn to your detriment.

**GT:** You mean that the opposition leaders don't have a strategic plan...

**G.KH.:** They did have it, but not everything happened the way they had expected.

**GT:** They were gearing up for this scenario for a long time and they were working on people too. Why do you think they failed to muster the desirable masses of people?

**G.KH.:** Yes, you're right. They had been preparing for that for a long time. I myself witnessed how Rustavi-2 TV station, and the Kmara [Enough] student movement worked for that purpose ... But to carry out such maximalist slogans and ideas and win support of a big mass of people, your motivations should be understandable... They started it out very well. They claimed that the elections were rigged, that they took the second place while they should lead the polls. This motivation was quite logical and acceptable for many people but they changed their slogans within a few days. They demanded that the election returns be cancelled and the President immediately resigned. This new demand proved to be not so convincing for the larger masses.

**GT:** Why?

**G.KH.:** When you put out such a demand, you are to spell out why you want it to happen. Or, you should realize that you will have problems. Besides, when you announce that the President should resign immediately, you should have enough motivation for that. Only claiming that life is unbearable, that we all are in plight etc. is not at all enough. A very big part of population actually came out in the streets on Saturday. An estimate 15 000 people gathered. This was a peak indeed but the impetus was not maintained.

**GT:** Can we conclude today that Saakashvili's intention to conduct a revolution is a failure?

**G.KH.:** We can say now that the revolution did not take place on this stage. Nonetheless, this fact should be an indicator for the government that they don't deal with a simple matter. People were fully aware of what their protest meant. Unless situation improves in the country, people will march in the streets again. Notably, similar events preceded the end of Milosevic's career.

**GT:** Shevardnadze will step down on his own, as his presidential mandate expires in an year and a half. Why do you think the opposition leaders hurry to topple him through the revolution?



**G.KH.:** Opposition leaders thought this was an excellent opportunity for them but they failed to weigh up everything in a due manner...

**GT:** Specifically, who devised this scheme?

**G.KH.:** This was Mikheil Saakashvili's scheme. Zhvania-Burjanadze would never have thought of that...

**GT:** Why was Saakashvili in such a hurry?

**G.KH.:** This is a strategic misstep of Saakashvili.

**GT:** Many assume that Saakashvili's plan is financed by foreign forces. You've mentioned that you had been watching this process closely. What do you think of that?

**G.KH.:** Yes, I was following this process and I have some opinion about that.

**GT:** What information do you have about financing of this plan?

**G.KH.:** I only know that such processes usually require huge finances. I don't know who finances these concrete processes in Tbilisi.

**GT:** Did you try to identify them?

**G.KH.:** Frankly speaking, I didn't have an access and opportunity to do so. But the fact is that everything needs a deal of money. They even say that Soros Foundation gave them money... But I don't think the Open Society Foundation would have rendered such a big support. I am well aware of how the structure of Soros Foundation works. It would not have provided that money necessary for such a big plan.

**GT:** However, Soros' role in the plan seems apparent...

**G.KH.:** Yes, you may be right, especially, when it comes to the Kmara movement. But I don't know how much money was provided to finance Kmara.

**GT:** As far as I know, Soros earmarked half million USD for Kmara...

**G.KH.:** Well, I didn't know that...

**GT:** Kakha Lomaia, Director of the Soros Foundation repeatedly expressed his support to the oppositionary political groups. Do you think the international funds have the right to interfere in the domestic affairs of a foreign country?

**G.KH.:** In my personal experience, international foundations always forbid me to lobby political processes or provide finances for them from the grant funds. It is generally assumed that international funds don't normally grant such right to grant recipients. So, there really might be some discrepancy in this regard. However, we don't know exactly what happened. Perhaps, head office of the fund allowed Kakha Lomaia to spend money in that direction.

**GT:** Certainly, Lomaia would not have done so on his own. But did George Soros himself had the right to finance rebellious plans of any political group in Georgia?

**G.KH.:** As a rule, international funds don't have such right. But I am unfamiliar with the statute of George Soros' foundation. Perhaps, his statute allows such exceptions. You cannot challenge the fund if all these were done legally.

**GT:** Why do you think a coup d'état could be in the interest of George Soros?

**G.KH.:** I cannot imagine that. It's possible that this is an outcome of the image that Mikheil Saakashvili built at the international arena. Apparently, Saakashvili turned out to be an acceptable person for the West. They had a message in the US that there is a man in Georgia who fights for democracy. So, the rich people in the US decided they are to help a man fighting for democracy.

**GT:** Should they help him to overthrow the government?

**G.KH.:** No, certainly no one would help him if this objective were formulated this way. And I believe it was not formulated that way. The slogans — down with president. Let's topple the government etc. — could not have been included in the project that received financing. We should not blame George Soros for financing Saakashvili in order to bring down Shevardnadze. The project might have

received financing for other purposes but it set a different goal later. So to say – it is a completely different project.

**GT:** Other democratic institutions also helped the leaders of the opposition. For one, the NDI finances the trip of opposition leaders Saakashvili, Zhvania and Gamkrelidze to Yugoslavia, to share the experiences of governmental overthrow.

**G.KH.:** I don't agree with the speculation that this seminar was an instruction on how they could topple the President and government in their countries.

**GT:** The fact is that they have gained such experience...

**G.KH.:** It may look like otherwise, but the seminar actually had another goal. The seminar aimed at showing the participants how democratic processes have been developing in Yugoslavia and how the countries have been liberated from totalitarian regimes. This was not an instruction indeed.

**GT:** Mr. Khutsishvili, you're an expert of conflict management, did you forecast what direction the politician processes would take in Georgia?

**G.KH.:** I really expected that these processes would take more strained turn that would result in bloodshed. But thanks to God we avoided the bloody conflict. I wanted the opposition and the government compromise to the benefit of the people who came out to support the opposition. But apparently, this will not be the case.

**GT:** Will it be a way out if Shevardnadze resigns?

**G.KH.:** Shevardnadze will not resign today. Even if he does so we will enter a legislative deadlock. Besides, if he quits today he will have the right to run for the presidency for another term in 2005.

**GT:** That is, Shevardnadze may agree to resign...

**G.KH.:** If it suits us, of course it can also happen...

**GT:** That is, we may even conclude that the opposition and Shevardnadze have made a deal...

**G.KH.:** This would be the biggest and far-sighted conspiracy theory that I cannot share.

## Real Spoilers in a Would-Be Peace Process (The South-Caucasus Case)

George Khutsishvili

2004

Stedman defines spoilers as actors who aim to undermine the peace process. That is, we need to have a peace process ongoing for the spoilers to enter the scene. In the still unresolved South-Caucasus conflicts – in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia – peace agreement has never been signed, negotiations are stalled, and the positions of the parties are frozen. Nevertheless, in the official UN, state and interstate documents peace process is mentioned as ongoing in all mentioned cases. Instead of collapsed peace agreement, we need to understand the collapsed process that should have led to a peace agreement. To avoid ambiguity, it is logical to assume that spoiling may also happen to the started, halted or frozen peace processes, where signing of a peace agreement is yet an unreach goal. Finally, may it happen that a custodian of the peace process appears a spoiler itself?

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Unpublished Manuscript, Tbilisi, Georgia, 2004.

What is continuously referred to as the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict has really undergone structural stages.

Parties to conflict at its high-intensity stage (1992-93):

## REAL SPOILERS IN A WOULD-BE PEACE PROCESS (THE SOUTH-CAUCASUS CASE)

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In order to understand who are the spoilers e.g. in the Abkhazia peace process, how to classify or otherwise qualify them, we need to look back at the major stages of the dispute.

What is continuously referred to as the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict has really undergone structural stages.

**Parties to conflict at its high-intensity stage (1992-93):**

- Separatist Abkhaz leadership;
- Georgia's interim leadership;
- North-Caucasus rebellious Confederation.

**Parties to conflict at its "frozen" stage (1994-present):**

- Georgian state authorities;
- Abkhazia's de facto government;
- Abkhazia's "legitimate" government in-exile (an actor produced as a result of the war).

Main actors who form the process are the Georgian and Abkhaz societies collectively, whose positions are represented by the positions of the respective elites. Stakeholders are all the actors with perpetual interest in the conflict zone, such as official Russian leadership, along with part of its political, military and economic elite, the United States, EU structures represented on site, IDP and refugee communities produced as a result of the humanitarian crisis, North-Caucasus communities that are kin to the Abkhaz, ethnic/demographic groups within Georgian society that express their distinct view on the conflict, etc.

In the existing distribution of forces, the peace agreement if it were signed would have as signatories representatives of the Georgian state and the Abkhazia de facto leadership. Most probably a Russian official representative would also be a signatory of the agreement. Custodians of the peace process would be primarily the United Nations – represented by special representative of Secretary General and head of UNOMIG, and to a lesser extent OSCE.

## Statement

on the situation in Ajara

# 2004

15 March, 2004

Yesterday, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, a group of representatives of Georgian non-governmental organizations was not allowed to cross the administrative border of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara. It is noteworthy that this action was carried

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Statement on the Situation in Ajara, Tbilisi, 17 March, 2004.

participation of Mr. Tsintskiladze, the speaker of the parliament of the autonomous

## STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN AJARA

Yesterday, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, a group of representatives of Georgian non-governmental organizations was not allowed to cross the administrative border of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara. It is noteworthy that this action was carried out by the armed groups of unknown origin and status dislocated at the Choloki bridge. The representatives of non-governmental organizations were harshly expelled from the Choloki territory. All these developments were carried out with an active participation of Mr. Tsintskiladze, the speaker of the parliament of the Autonomous Republic. Thus, the isolationist policy, terror and hostage-taking of citizens, is, in fact, the conscious choice of the official Batumi. It is worth noting that the only goal of the representatives of non-governmental organizations was to be on the spot and to meet with their colleagues from non-governmental organizations operating in Ajara. Through discussing the issue with Ajarian counterparts, the representatives of NGOs from Tbilisi would have a better knowledge/information on the facts of human rights violations in the Autonomous Republic (the

issue of human rights violations in Ajara was raised by non-governmental organizations during the working meeting that took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2004 in the Sheraton-Metechi Palace).

We, the members of the indicated group of non-governmental organizations, are stating that we clearly witnessed the danger facing any citizen living on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara. Taking in account the ongoing processes in the Autonomous Republic, we believe it is of utmost importance to create a monitoring group that will include the representatives of local, as well as international non-governmental organizations and embassies. The monitoring group will contribute to collecting precise information on human rights violations in Ajara.

Dr. George Khutsishvili (ICCN, Tbilisi, Georgia)

2005

Conflict in discourses offered in the further text is a problem related to an enduring dispute between the social actors called parties and marked by incompatibility of goals in their programmes expressed in positions. Almost all existing (=persisting) ethno-territorial conflicts have commonalities in that their development – as a rule, a product of multiple actors and factors – is structurally centred on a dispute between two ethnically identifiable and distinctly unequal-sized communities that have lived for a long time in the same country (this kind of relationship belongs to asymmetrical binary oppositions). Inequality in size and resources creates a delusive

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, International Conference, August 15, 2005.

## “FROZEN CONFLICT” AS A RESULT OF AN UNCOORDINATED COLLABORATIVE ACTION

Conflict in discourses offered in the further text is a problem related to an enduring dispute between the social actors called parties and marked by incompatibility of goals in their programmes expressed in positions. Almost all existing (=persisting) ethno-territorial conflicts have commonalities in that their development – as a rule, a product of multiple actors and factors – is structurally centred on a dispute between two ethnically identifiable and distinctly unequal-sized communities that have lived for a long time in the same country (this kind of relationship belongs to asymmetrical binary oppositions). Inequality in size and resources creates a delusive impression on the larger community side that imposing “law and order” on a smaller side could restore the pre-conflict situation, while on the smaller community side develops an inferiority complex combined with a humiliated national dignity feeling and desire to block-out. The same inequality at a more developed stage of the conflict plays a trick on a larger (and seemingly stronger) side, allowing the smaller side to accumulate resources and



external support sufficient to achieve secession, sometimes even a military victory, and later, a prolonged “frozen” post-war stage. This phenomenon may be called the “Tom-and-Jerry Effect” in ethno-territorial conflict<sup>1</sup>.

Dramatically different, even irreconcilable look the conflict pictures generated in the parties to conflict as a result of conflict development, which the parties try to communicate to the world and would expect the world to share. Both have their philosophies/ideologies based on anything ranging from strict data to myths and legends. Usually a conflict area appears insignificant on a world geopolitical map, and hardly ever the picture generated in a party to conflict becomes indisputable for the world community. Yet the world has to perceive and consume any conflict as something interpretable in familiar terms and explained against known examples. The sum-total “objective” picture created by an outside-neutral expert view that becomes wide-spread differs from either of the insider-partial views. It is often influenced by a merciless informational warfare, in which the party to conflict having stronger motivation and access to stronger informational networks is usually more successful.

An internationally declared official picture of a conflict justifies and protects a party that has larger – or sole – degree of legitimacy in its position (e.g. the impaired territorial integrity of a state and/or large number of refugees/IDPs to return home). In numerous cases, an average mass consumer-oriented informational picture of a conflict is a synopsis of various tell tailing stories attributing a failing peace process more to the parties themselves (pictured as stubborn and irrational in behaviour), than to insufficient or spoiled mediation efforts. They therefore motivate a civilised consumer to automatically justify and vindicate the smart yet vulnerable smaller against the clumsy bigger one (again the “Tom-and-Jerry Effect”),

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. George Khutsishvili. The “Tom-and-Jerry Effect” in the Picture of Ethno-Territorial Conflict. “The 24 Hours”, 12 July 2004, Tbilisi, Georgia.

and finally to get sick and tired of both and of the whole unending story.

How the story actually ends depends much less on the immediate parties to conflict, than on a much wider and stronger range of actors that form the environment of conflict.

The question is often asked lately if Kosovo gaining independence and Northern Cyprus acknowledged by the international community may have impact on the Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia or South Ossetia developments. The question reads: "May international support for restoration of the impaired territorial integrity be shattered by new counter-examples, and could precedences enhance the chances for separatism to win"?

2005

The very essence of the issue is related to the equation that has formed in regard to the unresolved ethno-territorial disputes worldwide: a summarising relationship between two multi-faceted groups representing, on the one hand, the actors who for various reasons strive for preservation of the distribution of forces, roles and influences established as a result of the conflict (the status quo party), and, on the other, those who strive for its alteration/transformation.

Conflict support (or preservation) system<sup>1</sup> dwells on a sum-total of stable influences from actors operating at local, national, regional and international levels who, for whatever reasons, are interested in prolonging the status quo, keeping the conflict (or post-conflict situation)<sup>2</sup> "frozen" (therefore they act as "freezers") and in creating obstacles to actors and parties consciously aiming to transform the conflict (or "movers")<sup>3</sup>. The version a mass media consumer gets:

<sup>1</sup> We use the term "system" and not "cumulus" or "multitude" because similarity of interests of seemingly unconnected actors foster synergies, and participating actors often enter in mutually conducive relationships.

<sup>2</sup> In some contexts "conflict" is identified with a high-intensity stage characterised by a certain level of hostilities often followed by humanitarian crisis or mass exodus of refugees/IDPs from the conflict zone. Respectively, the whole subsequent period of an unresolved dispute is referred to as a "post-conflict period".

<sup>3</sup> Cf. George Khutsishvili, What Freezes and What Unfreezes Conflicts? <http://sef-bonn.org/events/2000/kaukasus/khutsishvili.html>.

conflicts stay unresolved because of inability of the parties to negotiate, or weakness of the custodians of the peace process<sup>1</sup>. Hardly anyone guesses to refer to a cumulative strength of “custodians” of the *status quo* that appear capable of imposing a simulation of peace efforts instead of really proactive result-oriented actions, and eventually freeze any process that might lead to a positive peace. That formally complies with limitations of the mandates of international organisations operating in the conflict zones – and act as custodians – whose main task is to maintain negative peace, i.e. minimise the possibility of violations of ceasefire agreements and obstruction of ongoing drowsy negotiations (mostly focused on current technical issues, not peacebuilding initiatives).

A lot is made in today’s world in the name and for the sake of stability; and although the kind of equilibrium achieved in so-called “frozen conflict” zones as a result of domination of the status quo party is fragile and illusive, in human perception status quo itself has connotations and associations with stability, more so than transformation and integration that relate to proactive and risky action towards change. Bureaucracy seeking stability of its own kind, joining in within a mosaic of various obstructers, spoilers<sup>2</sup> or good-wishers, is always scores of points ahead of any initiative aiming at a positive peacebuilding effort. Conflict support system works towards promotion of those cadres in civil society, donor community, project evaluators and expert assessments, diplomatic circles, international or peacemaking organisations that would not jeopardise the frozen state of conflict. Conflict support system is apprehensive of proactive statesmen with a political will to defreeze the conflict, and tries to curb their efforts picturing them as risky adventurers or warmongers. Playing on a universal truth that there is no military way of resolving a frozen ethnic conflict, “custodians”

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<sup>1</sup> Please watch out for the forthcoming book: Oliver Richmond and Edward Newman, eds. *Challenges to Peace-Building in Armed Conflict: Spoilers, violence and conflict resolution*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Stephen John Stedman, *Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes*, *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (published by MIT Press), Autumn 1997, pp. 5-53.

of the status quo form the public opinion in favour of keeping the balance between the powers indefinitely long, and against any interventions towards changing this balance. Of course, this needs creation and advertising of limited closed initiatives in confidence building between representatives of parties to conflict that cannot lead to a socially tangible effect.

Not to create a slightest impression that the author is obsessed with any kind of conspiracy theory, we should stress that conflict support system is not created by a conscious conglomerate of stakeholders, nor is it a complex operation steered from some clandestine centre. It should rather be understood as a domineering vector in multitude of actors operating at different levels, acting on their own but united by common or similar interests, where horizontal alliances may be shaped between those persons and groups that expect promotion of their goals and achievement of synergies in parallelling their actions with others.

It is always important to identify a major system-forming factor, which in the case of conflict support system is undoubtedly interest. As we will see in further text, interests of various actors may be very different but they nevertheless may facilitate the same goals and lead to the same effects. It is important to keep in mind that interest in conflict analysis reveals itself as an objective factor and as such is not equal to conscious intention or unconscious attitude.

Endorsement of the divided Cyprus as consisting of two independent states lies within the status quo. Another and less obvious chain of thought is required to understand how the prevalence of the status quo ideology may lead to a proactive action, e.g. granting independence to Kosovo<sup>1</sup>, or facilitating the incorporation of Abkhazia in Russian Federation. Regarding the Abkhazia case, obviously,

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<sup>1</sup> Parallels and comparisons between the Balkans and the Caucasus situation may be found in the article: George Khutsishvili and Albrecht Schnabel, *The Kosovo Conflict: The Balkans and the Southern Caucasus*, in: "Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship" (Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Takur, Eds.), Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2000.

there is incompatibility between the positions of immediate parties to conflict (often referred to as “irreconcilable national projects”), but this is only natural if we have a real and not imaginary conflict. Remarkably, there is incompatibility between the declared and actual positions of the Russian Federation – a custodian of the peace process, self-appointed yet endorsed by the international community and a principal broker/mediator to the conflict – with regard to the Georgian-Abkhaz dispute that the international community has been tolerating. The official Russian position being adherence to the territorial integrity of Georgia and promotion of efforts towards integration of Abkhazia in Georgia’s legal space, the reality has been dramatically different: separatist ideology and anti-Georgian sentiment in Abkhazia have been systematically supported and fostered from Russia. Large-scale property privatisation via Russian or third-party companies, giving Russian passports and citizenship to the population, after which Russian statesmen declare in the State Duma that Russia has the right to interfere to protect the (already) Russian citizens in Abkhazia.

Analysis of the Abkhazia case will be used in the further text to reveal the interests that unite very unlikely actors in a kind of “partnership” that supports “no peace, no war” solution, and therefore, secessionism to a carefully calculated extent, and eventually kills creative thought and transformative vision with regard to conflicts. It curbs the development of public diplomacy, communication and dialogue between the communities, deepens the sensation of deadlock, disparity among conflict-affected groups and thus, increases possibility of the renewal of hostilities.

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I guess it would raise brows if we conclude that a Russian general which still cannot reconcile with demolition of the once formidable empire, a rich Armenian immigrant in America trying to strengthen a regional environment for independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, a representative of a respectable European peacemaking institution, a

member of a paramilitary grouping in the forests of Kodori, and an OSCE mission officer in Tbilisi may all have the same common point of interest in keeping the situation in a conflict zone unchanged. On the international side, operational network of the conflict preservation system is formed mostly by individuals at a mid-range executive level of the agencies involved – most flexible and dynamic – feeling their personal cause or incentive matching the task of the system.

In terms of the actors involved, the conflict preservation system with regard to the Georgia conflicts is formed by such unlikely a company as:

- Russian authorities and circles supporting secessionism in all parts of the former USSR except for the territory of Russian Federation itself (cf. the Chechen case); their direct interest-provider: leadership of the Russian peacekeeping forces in the conflict zone (the interest has been to make newly independent states as much depended on Russia as possible, unresolved conflicts being used as pressure and manipulation tools; the interest is characterised by high-intensity at all times, which indicates its strategic importance);

- Radicals on both sides of conflict accusing their respective governments in collaborationism, insisting on maximalist platforms, and rejecting any compromised agreements (the interest being to keep up rating and popularity, gather votes for elections, often also to get shares from shadow economics and illegal business; the intensity varies with political regime: in Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze<sup>1</sup> times radicals had maximum publicity);

- Guerilla groups and armed *militia* on both sides of conflict openly supported by radicals, and covertly supported by the authorities, overtly confronting each other and actually cooperating in illegal trade and exchange of hostages (the interest is to profit from

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<sup>1</sup> Zviad Gamsakhurdia was one of the leaders of Georgian national liberation movement since mid 1980s, and the first elected president of post-Soviet Georgia between May 1991 and January 1992. Was ousted on January 6, 1992 by oppositionary forces who accused him of extreme nationalism, and succeeded by the former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze who ruled till November 23, 2003.

keeping the parties separated, alienated, and the enemy image high on both sides of conflict, to prevent a compromised agreement);

- Groups that support international terrorism (the interest is to obtain favourable environment by maintaining unrecognised militarised enclaves and uncontrolled territories as corridors for networking and places for terrorist training bases; this interest was highly intensive in late 90s);

- Smugglers, traffickers and illegal traders (the interest is to maintain uncontrolled territories for their operations; this interest varies in intensity);

- Some civil society activists and groups, intellectuals and human rights defenders (their interest is to gain influence and attract international donors by demonstrating courage and persistence in protecting “the weaker” against “the stronger”, creating purposefully restricted models of dialogue between the parties and providing for them equal opportunities in that dialogue; this interest is high at all times);

- Diasporas and ethnic associations abroad (their interest is to promote objectives of their kinfolk communities in conflict zones, and protect the respective seceded enclaves from a spillover effect that might result from compromised solutions to other disputes; this interest remains high at all times);

- Missions of international organisations, including UN and OSCE, operating on the spot and having certain responsibilities with regard to negotiations and conflict resolution (their interest in this regard is a natural-bureaucratic one: to prove their necessity and indispensability, enlarge resources and apparatus, create or support as few obstacles to their status and capabilities as possible, and control the situation with as little effort as possible);

- Transnational corporations that are stakeholders and/or owners of regional scale projects/programmes (their interest is not to jeopardise their investments and to minimise the risk of uncalculable developments in or with regard to conflict zones, therefore

they hardly ever support conflict transformation or humanitarian intervention initiatives).

Russia is, ostensibly, a most obvious spoiler and freezer of the peace process in the Caucasus, but is in reality – a very proactive actor. She has maintained by means of the conflict malmediation the levers to control regional processes that, although far from desirable, gave her the capacity to prolong military presence, promote political interests in the unrecognised entities and stand between the West and the post-Soviet states. Russian analysts try to consider as conceptually identical the national liberation movements in the former Soviet "Union Republics" (since end of 1991 – NIS), and the secessionist movements in autonomies of the NIS. Their logic is: if the West deemed legitimate for Ukrainians or Georgians to seek independent statehood, why should the same right be denied for Abkhazians, Transdnistrians, or Karabakhis? Remarkably, the same argumentation fails to work about Chechens, but that is a topic for another article.

2005



Roundtable Seminar

Conflicts in the South Caucasus:  
Political, Security and Development Challenge

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Tbilisi

5 and 6 July 2005

The Caucasus Policy Institute, King's College London

in association with

The Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (I

The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Conciliation Resources.

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Chairman, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Georgia. Roundtable Seminar: Conflicts in the South Caucasus: Political, Security and Development Challenges, 5-6 July, 2005, Tbilisi. Organizers: The Caucasus Policy Institute, King's College London, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Conciliation Resources.

Giorgi Khutsishvili, Chairman, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi

In my view the problem is not so much that we have unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus, but that these conflicts have become frozen. The main issue is how to overcome the inertia that the conflicts have acquired, which is preventing the interested parties from resolving them. Looking back over the history of these conflicts, it is evident that attempts to change the situation in the conflict zones have provoked covert attempts to preserve the status quo. This is because it is in the interest of many parties either officially involved in the conflict zone, or interested in the conflict in one way or another, to change the situation or to preserve it as it is.

Most of the ethno-territorial conflicts in the world remain unresolved, then, mainly because those with an interest in prolonging the status quo are much stronger internationally, regionally and locally than those with an interest in changing the situation and helping the conflicts to emerge from their frozen state. This group of forces that spontaneously coalesces around the zone of conflict, and that has economic, political or other interests in prolonging the conflict I have described as a conflict preservation system. In this perspective

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## THE WAY FORWARD: PRACTICAL MEASURES

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the main issue is how to deal with this system. The challenge is how to defrost the conflicts. We have had very good example of a frozen conflict, I am sorry to say, during this conference. Positions have stayed the same as they were many years ago, as have the issues in the debate, the parties and their positions, and the rules of the game. This stagnation prevents the parties involved from looking at things with fresh eyes, and from perceiving the opening up and the closing down of opportunities. Impulses to resolve the conflict are subdued and overwhelmed by impulses to preserve the status quo. In this way we can distinguish between freezers and movers. The freezers are the spoilers of the peace process, the parties that prevent it from having a successful outcome. In many conflicts in the world we see the spoiling of solutions to civil wars. However traumatic the living conditions of the people, dictators managed to maintain themselves in power, especially in Africa. In most cases the efforts of the international community prove to be insufficient to resolve or to defrost the conflict in a positive way. This vicious circle of conflict preservation is the main issue that needs to be addressed. So who are the movers? Those behind the democratic revolutions are movers. I have no hesitation in saying that what is now happening in the CIS space is a positive development, and that the revolution in Georgia opened up new opportunities for the people there to deal with their problems. This is not just an academic judgment: it was clear in practice that new opportunities were opened up. However, alongside the view that the defrosting of conflicts opens up opportunities, there is another view that defrosting conflicts creates a threat of destabilization. The events of summer 2004, for example, represent a panic reaction on the part of the conflict preservation system to the emergence of opportunities for a peaceful solution. The opportunities emerged from the improvements in relations between Georgia and Russia following the economic summit in Tbilisi. Saakashvili and Putin's meetings were based on new priorities and they led to certain agreements about the conflict zones. It is important to note the differences between the South Ossetia conflict and the Abkhazia conflict. Georgians do

not perceive the South Ossetians as engaging in ethnic cleansing of Georgians. From the South Ossetian point of view, Georgians are not occupiers of their land; they are not aliens on their territory. However, according to the Abkhazian view of things, which has strengthened over many decades, especially over the last decade, Georgians are occupiers. The experience of peaceful life together, mixed marriages and so on becomes more and more remote as time passes and successive generations lose any memory of it. Thus these legends become frozen in the minds of the population. This serves the aims of the conflict preservation system, to have the kind of alienation in the conflict zone that makes reconciliation impossible. Some consider that defrosting conflicts may be undesirable because it may bring all sorts of unpredictable consequences. We heard this view in summer 2004. Yet this should not lead us to the conclusion that we have to abandon any moves, however peaceful and non-violent, to defreeze the conflict and that we should simply prolong the status quo. This was the policy that the Shevardnadze government followed during its decade in power. While international and domestic experts characterized Shevardnadze's government as lacking in political will, the successor regime was certainly not lacking in that. But last summer this turned out to have unpredictable results, which led to a lot of criticism. I cannot pass over the Russian factor. Here we have a paradoxical situation, which has been noted by other participants. A custodian of the peace process cannot be a spoiler at the same time. And Russia's role has been more that of a spoiler than a mediator. May I refer you to a new publication due to be released by the UN Universities Press at the end of this year containing contributions by an international team of specialists, and devoted to the role of spoilers in the peace process.

Question: When Maxim Yusin commented that we have difficulties in understanding Russian-Ukrainian relations, he was referring to an issue of national identity and to the pain of divorce. We had this feeling when Abkhazia wanted to separate from Georgia, because Georgians were used to thinking of Abkhazia as part of their country. However the Abkhazians maintain that they are a

different people and they do not want to have anything in common with Georgians. They even claim that they do not have anything in common with Georgia historically. We just have to live with it. In the second half of the twentieth century there was a change in the understanding of the concept of nationality. At present, nobody in Georgia doubts that a people have a different ethnicity, and that they are a different nation, if that is what they think. However the thing is that the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict has happened within one state, and the break-up and the ethnic cleansing of a part of the population from places where they lived for a long period of time do not constitute an inter-state but rather an intra-state issue. If we are speaking about the Abkhazian nation and the possibility of creating an independent state for it, the referendum to decide that cannot be legitimate if the voters are solely people who currently live on that territory. All the people who lived there before the start of the conflict should be able to vote. When it comes to Ukraine, and the difference between Ukraine's and Russia's ethnoses, it is a reality which is hard for Russians to accept. Ukraine is an independent country and an independent nation. Ukraine's self awareness as an independent nation, despite the substantial history that it shares with Russia, is a historical reality. So it is useful to point to these parallels between countries. They demonstrate that a nation becomes a nation if it has its own self-awareness and if it has the potential to develop on its own. At the same time, there are differences between the Ukrainian and the Abkhazian cases. The Abkhazian case is about the division of a nation and a struggle within one nation. In Ukraine, on the other hand, the building of a national identity started a very long time ago, varying in intensity over time. The sense of identity in Ukraine is much stronger than the one of the Abkhazian people. It would be hard to prove that Ukrainians are the same people as Russians and do not have the right to selfdetermination. I think there is a historical logic which already exists, and Ukraine is developing in its own way. I have a brief comment on OSCE Ambassador Reeve's report, for which I thank him very much. He said that there were around fifty or sixty

2005

projects aimed at supporting civil society in South Ossetia. At the present there are almost no projects of this kind involving partnership with Georgian civil society organisations, although plans for such projects do exist. Our organisation presented such a project, and we have NGO partners on the Ossetian side, but it still has no funding.

Comment: I note that the idea of unfreezing the conflicts turned out to be very popular and was touched upon by many speakers, and I would like to add a few words to what I said yesterday. The conflict preservation system works, in my opinion, to prevent the structural transformation of conflicts. Some have mentioned that the structural components of conflicts are indeed changing. For instance, the actors have changed. In the secessionist regimes, we can see a concentrating of power going on, and more dependence on outside actors. Of course there is some change. But the system works specifically towards preventing a structural transformation of conflicts into something else in a way which might make them more manageable. So the task is how to make the system more manageable, without destructive interference. For this purpose, I think that the conflict preservation system should be opposed by a conflict regulation system that would reflect a very clear policy of cooperation between governments, international organisations and civil society. These components are all necessary in order to bring about change. I would say that it is something like the opposite of creating an enemy image. The process of creating of an enemy image has been described as the projection of shadows. In order to resolve conflicts, we need to shed light on the conflict preservation systems and then to counter them using conflict regulation systems.

# 2005

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Georgia. The International Conference, 13 May, 2005, Istanbul, Turkey.

## THE IMPACT OF “ROSE REVOLUTION” IN GEORGIA ON FROZEN CONFLICTS AND THE PROSPECTS OF EURO-INTEGRATION FOR THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

After the so called “Rose revolution” in November 2003 that resulted from the organized popular protest against the corrupt regime, but is still regarded by some critics as an anti-constitutional coupe sponsored by George Soros, Georgia faces new challenges. The democratic opposition leaders who came to power inherited loads of problems that could ensure the status of a failed state for Georgia. Enthusiasm of youth helps them believe that the process of reforms that despite a substantial Western support is extremely hard to implement, will be successfully fulfilled. New Georgian leadership declared about its strife to restore territorial integrity, join NATO and integrate into European structures, including the far-reaching goal – EU membership.

All these tasks are interdependent: (a) NATO membership is directly dependent on the ability of a country to effectively resolve

internal political conflicts and (b) integration into Euro-Atlantic security system serves as a springboard to be admitted in united Europe, as in case of some Eastern European countries.

In Russia this program is perceived as ultimate detachment of Georgia from the Russian sphere of influence and is assessed in a negative way. In Spring 2004 both parties took serious steps that aimed at improving the relations and creating favorable investment environment for Russian business in Georgia.

In the aftermath of a new wave of revolution in May 2004 the semi-seceded autonomous region of Ajara was liberated from the corrupt regime of Aslan Abashidze (comments made in Russia that Abashidze and Shevardnadze could maintain their posts if not the interference by the Kremlin emissary Igor Ivanov, are wrong). However, the Ajara events did not negatively effect Georgian-Russian relations that were at the peak, and at the same time convinced the Georgian society in the ability of a new leadership.

Developments that took place in Summer 2004 became a serious test for the country: a miscalculated attempt to defreeze the conflict in South Ossetia brought to unpredicted results, radically worsened the situation in and around the conflict zone, caused casualties and an overall militarization of the subregion. Russian authorities have preferred to side with the officially unrecognized authorities in Tskhinvali (administrative centre of South Ossetia) rather than with Georgian government. Warmed up relations with Russia were deteriorated again. Mistakes were made by all parties; however, Georgian society was sincerely surprised to be “overthrown” by the Russian partner at a hard moment; and the tense situation of the past years was reverted in the conflict zone.

In the meanwhile, the EU has made a decision about unprecedented financial assistance to Georgia while the US has continued the development of the program of assistance for the Georgian Army. Due to personnel cut within corrupted law-enforcement structures and a pressure on corrupted officials the state budget earnings have increased threefold. However in January 2005, anniversary

of the revolution, the Council of Europe released a quite critical assessment of the situation in Georgia. Everyone can understand that main “battles” are facing Georgia ahead. President Saakashvili underlines the strive of Georgia to resolve conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by peaceful means and presents in Strasbourg the plan of incorporation of South-Ossetian Republic within Georgian federal state on the basis of worthy and efficient terms. It is worth to mention that the image of the Ossetians in Georgian society is much more positive than the image of the Abkhaz, as the Abkhaz are identified with the ethnic cleansing and expulsion of the entire Georgian population from Abkhazia in 1993.

2005

Any perspective for federalism and decentralization of power meets with resistance from some radical groups in Georgian society, however, sociological surveys prove that the Georgian society is capable to consider those key reforms that make possible reconciliation with the Abkhaz and Ossetians.

Alienation of the Abkhaz from Georgia and their dependency on Russia hinder quick progress in negotiations with the Abkhaz. Georgian officials are now trying to accumulate efforts to achieve progress in talks with South Ossetian officials. However, all that meets with their uncompromised position: “we already represent an independent state and our goal is to be incorporated within Russian Federation”. Such position itself brings the situation in the conflict zone to an impasse. Since the July 2004 crisis these sentiments in Tskhinvali have only been strengthened. Officially declared position of Russia – recognition of the territorial integrity of Georgia and internationally sponsored assistance and mediation of Russia in conflict resolution – contradicts with real actions: encouragement of the *de facto* authorities to the incorporation of conflict zones into the legal structures of Russian Federation (a “hidden annexation”, in assessment of some Georgian analysts).

People have talked much about the unwillingness of Shevardnadze government to propose to the Ossetians the restoration of autonomy that could contribute to the solution of the problem. Now there is an impression that the will of a new Georgian leadership



to constructively resolve the South Ossetian conflict just stimulates those forces in Russia who try to hinder the peace/reconciliation process and to inhibit strengthening of the Georgian statehood.

Johan Galtung has defined “conflict” as a situation where the parties pursue incompatible goals. Conflict resolution cannot usually imply a solution within the existing conflict structure, so, it needs to be transformed. What we can get if the conflict does not develop in the way when common interest and goal become visible? In this case we have two ways: either to stay with frozen conflict for an uncertainly long period of time, which brings impossibility of constructive transformation, or to apply the measures of pressure on the conflicting parties that are envisaged by international law in order to stimulate them to assume more constructive positions. First scenario is not reasonable for the Georgian party not only because of the risk of legitimizing the status quo but also because of the danger of criminalization and militarization of uncontrolled territory. The latter is endangered with activation of forces that hinder the change of status quo and organize provocations from outside, as well as escalation of military actions and traumatizing of the civil population. In these conditions it is vitally important to build cooperation between the parties in order to avoid destructive developments and promote fair and mutually accepted resolution of the dispute.

The Georgian revolution has influenced the developments in most of the post-Soviet space: the outcome of the elections in Moldova, the “orange revolution” in Ukraine, and the “tulip revolution” in Kyrgyzstan. GUAM (political alliance of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) is becoming more vital than the outdated CIS (post-Soviet alliance of all former union republics except the Baltics). Of course, the integration process in the South Caucasus is dependent on progress in resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, yet the regional security system is an urgent need, which also is a precondition for Euro- and Euro-Atlantic integration. The prospect of Euro-integration has acquired material forms after inclusion of the three South-Cauca-

sus republics in the European Neighbourhood Policy programme in 2004. However, it will be a long process before the EU membership may become a realistic objective for any of the South Caucasus states. One possible way to speed up this process might be strengthening of the broader regional ties and cooperation – such as Black Sea basin countries – including, first of all, Turkey, whose EU membership could serve as a trigger to accept the transformation that could finally lead to the incorporation in the EU of the countries like Georgia.

Identity Quest, National Myths and Social Attitudes:  
Georgia in the South-Caucasus Context

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2006 in Tbilisi, Georgia  
for the International Conference materials organized by Friedrich Naumann Foundation

2006

The Caucasus Region

The Caucasus  
Caucasus part  
of Russian

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), the International Conference Materials, Organized by Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Tbilisi, Georgia, 2006.

replaced the old Russo-centric *Zakavkazye* (Trans-Caucasus) inherited from the times when the entire region was part of the USSR, and earlier - Russian Empire. Regaining their national statehood, the three South-Caucasus countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – strive to

## IDENTITY QUEST, NATIONAL MYTHS AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES: GEORGIA IN THE SOUTH- CAUCASUS CONTEXT

### THE CAUCASUS REGION

The Caucasus region is divided by Great Caucasian Range of Mountains into the Northern Caucasus populated by peoples representing the republics and “*oblasts*” (i.e. lands or subregions) of Russian Federation, and the South Caucasus – a relatively new term in geography that has replaced the old Russo-centric *Zakavkazye* (Trans-Caucasus) inherited from the times when the entire region was part of the USSR, and earlier – Russian Empire. Regaining their national statehood, the three South-Caucasus countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – strive to overcome the legacy of totalitarian Soviet system, peacefully “defreeze” the protracted ethno-political conflicts (in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh) and build modern democratic communities.

## SOUTH CAUCASUS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

South Caucasus has experienced historical periods when it did not represent a single region politically, and, maybe, even culturally. In this sense we may even speak of a Myth of the Caucasus as an entity united by common tradition. Scholarly elites in the three countries (especially in Armenia or Georgia) consider their nations as primordial social organisms that have had their own life and historical destiny. Armenian, Azeri and Georgian ethno-religious communities that had been formed in different historical stages, have been divided between the neighboring empires (Persia, Turkey and later Russia) and formed numerous principalities and khanates that has had no clear-cut common identity until the spread of European nationalist doctrines in the nineteenth century, when motivated groups of intellectuals started their journeys into history in order to identify the basis of their nationalistic cohesion within the Tzarist Empire.

Historical experience of interaction between the three South-Caucasus nations during the last century seems to have been most influential for their interrelationship, as well as for constructing their national “self” out of historical findings, literary tradition, and nationalist discourse that, paradoxically, was quite encouraged in the Soviet period. Thus, intellectual elites of Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Georgians have ended up producing more or less explicated images of their respective nationalities that became quite powerfully rooted in the consciousness of larger communities. Whatever actually happened became far less important than how it was remembered.<sup>1</sup> The images of “self” in contrast to the “other” were strongly influenced by the nationalistic accounts of past historical events that often projected the negative images of neighbouring nationalities<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ronald Grigor Suny, “Living with the Other: Conflict and Cooperation among the Transcaucasian Peoples”, *Caucasus Regional Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> See Rondeli, Alex and Khelashvili, George. *Conflict and Cooperation in the South Caucasus: Historical, Institutional, and Political Context*, written for the forthcoming pub-

The most important events that shaped the nationalist discourse in all three countries unfolded in the beginning of the last century which was characterized by contending ideological currents of nationalism and socialism. In some cases, coincidence of class and national loyalties contributed to the sharpening of national identities defined as people's set of beliefs about themselves in relation to others. So, for example, Armenians were mostly perceived as rising bourgeoisie pressing Georgians whose self-perception was nobility and peasantry that had to compete with the new difficult social conditions brought about by capitalist transformations in the region. On the other hand, for Armenians fleeing religious and social persecution in the Ottoman Empire, Azeris primarily represented the Caucasian branch of the Turkic ethnos that was politically and socially dominant in the Ottoman Empire. These divisions and cross-perceptions contributed to the aggravated inter-ethnic relations from 1905 onward.

The origins of Armenian-Azeri inter-ethnic strife is subject to vast controversy between the political elites and academic communities of Armenia, Armenian Diaspora, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The holocaust of 1915 became a powerful shaping element of national identities of respectively Armenians and Azeris. Even the history of peaceful cohabitation of both nations during the seventy years of Soviet rule could not eliminate the impact of these events on national identities. This impact was taken further by the Armenian Diaspora that was mostly composed of descendents of Armenians from Anatolian Plateau that bore the collective memory of holocaust and was at the same time deprived from the cultural interaction with Azeris since the events of 1915. General public, as well as many policy-makers and analysts in all three South Caucasian nations as well as elsewhere, easily embraced the view that, for example, conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh was largely determined by historical animosities between the Armenian and Azeri communities.

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lication of the Oxford/UNU Project on Regional Cooperation and Conflict Prevention in the Southern Caucasus).

Since early 1990s, there seems to have been a relative decline in the scale of influence of nationalist appeal in all three South-Caucasus countries, and urgency of overcoming the existing conflicts in order to foster European integration created room for reviving the idea of Caucasus-wide integration. However, there remains a possibility of revival of these nationalist approaches in the case of renewed inter-state or inter-ethnic conflicts.

### **ETHNIC MINORITIES IN GEORGIA**

Georgia, located at the crossroads of different cultures and civilizations, has historically had multi-ethnic population. For centuries, migration processes and historical developments have shaped its diversity. Minorities living in Georgia significantly differ from one another in terms of number, type of residence (compact or dispersed) and degree of integration into the social and political life of the country. Their numbers have been fluctuating depending on the historical developments, post-conflict developments, migration trends and socio-economic situation in the country. Today, the biggest ethnic minority groups in Georgia are Azerbaijanis (or Azeris) and Armenians. Azerbaijanis mainly populate Kvemo Kartli region of Georgia in the South East, and Armenians are the dominating majority of population in Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Southern Georgia.

The problems that Armenian and Azeri communities face in Georgia mainly are of the social-economic character, which are shared by ethnically Georgian population in other regions of the country. However, the problems of language, education and participation in decision-making are those that create the sense of alienation and lead to misperceptions and tension. Both Armenians and Azerbaijanis have similar difficulties in the area of language. There are 141 Azeri and 133 Armenian schools in Georgia. However, there is a problem of textbooks for quality education. Besides, there is an acute problem of teaching the state language – Georgian – in schools. Number of qualified teachers in the regions is very small

and there practically are no approved methods of teaching Georgian to non-Georgian speakers. The situation is especially critical in the areas of compact settlement. Such situation leads to migration of talented young people to Armenia (respectively, Azerbaijan) and Russia for continuing education. Unfortunately this does not encourage them to come back and continue their career in Georgia, especially in view of their poor or no knowledge of the state language. There are very little opportunities for young people to learn it, even after the state has introduced the new program of sending teachers of Georgian to the regions and also of supporting Georgian language houses and education centers in the minority areas.

Mass media is another serious problem. Representatives of governmental structures and NGOs in Kvemo Kartli express great concern about isolation of the Azeri community both from the Georgian state and Georgian society. The main concerns seem to be the information vacuum that most Azerbaijanis experience. Most Azerbaijanis, Armenians and Greeks who live in Kvemo Kartli are unable to understand the Georgian mass media (although there are short insertions in national languages on Georgian national channels). Therefore they only receive information about what is going on in Georgia through Russian or Azerbaijani media. On the other hand, as a result of the lack of state language proficiency they are unable to understand Georgian laws, or to make full use of Georgian legal system (as the language used in the courts is Georgian) and are mostly unaware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Georgia. Here it is worth mentioning that Article 85/2 of the Constitution and Article 135 of Criminal Procedural Code of Georgia provide the right to a translator or interpreter for a member of national minority, but often this right is not exercised in practice or the provided service is rarely of high quality.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**

Local government and management is another acute problem in all of Georgia, but most significantly in minority areas. The level of

trust in the government officials and confidence in their decisions is very low, especially in the regions settled by national minorities. Serious migration processes were caused by the political developments in early 1990s, and were related to the period of Zviad Gamsakhurdia's presidency. This was the time in Georgian history marked with ethnic tensions and conflicts. At that point the issue of possible secession or creation of autonomous regions of Borchalo (in Kvemo Kartli) and Javakheti (in Samtskhe-Javakheti) came afloat. To avoid any such activity, the central government made sure to appoint ethnic Georgians on the key positions and unfortunately, kept this tendency even after the tensions cooled down. Meanwhile, the local minority population, often under the influence of external radical groups, started joining locally organized public movements or non-governmental organizations, which often acted based on nationalist ideals (e.g. Javakh and Virkh in Javakheti and Geyrat in Kvemo Kartli). For today, situation changed somewhat in Javakheti where ethnic balance in representation in local power structures is respected more than in Kvemo Kartli.

It needs to be mentioned that the social and economic problems that are the basis for the discontent in the minority areas (especially in Javakheti), are shared by the ethnically Georgian population in other regions of the country. However, these problems take an ethnic twist, since the population in these areas is mostly minority, they feel vulnerable, insecure and feel that they require special treatment from the state.

	Thousands	In total population, per cent
Total population*	4371,5**	100%
Georgian	3661,2	83,8
Abkhaz	3,5	0,1
Ossetian	38,0	0,9
Russian	67,7	1,5
Ukrainian	7,0	0,2
Azerbaijanis	284,8	6,5
Armenian	248,9	5,7



	Thousands	In total population, per cent
Jewish	3,6	0,1
Greek	15,2	0,3
Kurd	20,8	0,5

\*The table does not include current population of the seceded regions of Abkhazia (estimated 100,000) and South Ossetia (c. 30,000).

\*\*Population of Georgia is given according to the latest census of 2004, which did not include Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Almost a million settled abroad in the post-Soviet period.

## RELIGIOUS GROUPS OF GEORGIA

Historically, the religious picture of Georgia has comprised the Mainstream and the so-called traditional religions<sup>1</sup>. The Mainstream is the Eastern Orthodox Church of Georgia. Here, one has to point out that it is increasingly difficult to divide the Mainstream group into church-going people and nominal believers, i.e. individuals who belong to the group by their tradition only. In other words, there is no information on the level of church attendance of the above-mentioned high percent of the population, thus it is impossible to say the exact percentage of active Eastern Orthodox adherents in the country.

The second largest group belonging to the “traditional religion” is Muslims. The estimated percentage of Georgian Muslims is 9-11 percent, with about 4-5 percent being the Azeris and the rest being Ajarians. Similarly to Eastern Orthodox adherents, it is difficult to state the exact number of practicing Muslims. Similar situation can be found among the ethnically Armenian minority. According to

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<sup>1</sup> The term “traditional religion” derives from the Soviet period, when the government of USSR labeled all religions that have been present in the republics for more than a century with the title “traditional”. This was done in order to establish contacts with heads of traditional Churches, so that the Soviet regime could have exercised control over the processes. Since then, the term became popular and is still used in former Soviet republics. Similarly, the new religious denominations that have been entering the former Soviet space since 90s have been given the title of “new religions” or “sects”. Again, both terms are incorrect but are nevertheless widely used by the population.

the statistical department, the percentage of Gregorian adherents is 4 percent.

The situation is much easier in relation to other minorities whose ethnicity is not automatically linked with religious affiliation. So, other religious minorities of Georgia are:

**Catholics:** this group comprising ethnically Georgian, Armenian and Polish population represents about 0,8 percent of the total population<sup>1</sup>. Before the communist period, Georgia numbered 90,000 to 100,000 Catholics. But after 70 years of an atheist Soviet system, the contact with Georgian Catholics in the cities greatly decreased in the towns, but was easier to re-establish in the villages. This erosion was partly due to the insufficient number of Georgian priests within the Catholic Church. In point of fact, there is only one Georgian priest in Georgia, the others are Poles and Italians who are translating the Roman liturgy into the Georgian language<sup>2</sup>. Georgia's Catholic community is today divided into three rites: Roman Catholics, Armenians and Assyrians. They are concentrated in Djavakhetia, in the South, but there are also significant communities in Batumi, Kutaisi and Tbilisi.

**Evangelical-Baptist Church of Georgia:** being one of the socially active Churches of Georgia, the Baptist Church has about 0,25 percent of adherents, with all of them being active church members. The key spots of Baptism in Georgia can be found in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Telavi and other cities of Georgia. Importantly, the majority of the adherents are ethnically and culturally Georgians.

**Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Georgia:** this tiny community comprising less than 0,10 of the population is mostly composed of ethnic Germans and Armenians. The community is mainly Russian-speaking while the Bishop is generally a German, serving his

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<sup>1</sup> Papuashvili, Nugzar, "Georgia and the World Religions. Review and Glossary", (in Georgian), ed. Sozar Subar, Publication of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Supported by Cordaid Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> "Georgia: the Catholic Church has lost its legal status", By Florence Mardirossian in Tbilisi, translated by Victoria Bryan and Michèle-Ann Okolotowicz, article published in 18/07/2005 issue, [www.caucasus.com](http://www.caucasus.com).

term in Georgia as an official representative of the German Lutheran Church. Among the problems hindering the process of integration of the community into the Georgian society, some experts point to the “guest” nature of the church that does not yet perceive itself as “Georgian”.

**Other Protestant denominations** such as the Pentecostals, Adventists, Evangelicals and Charismatics, Mormons and Salvation Army adherents that are often referred to as “others” in various statistical data comprise 0,8 of the population<sup>1</sup>. Among these groups, the fastest-growing denominations are Pentecostals and Charismatics.

**Other religious groups** are people of the so-called oriental faiths such as the Iezids and Bahais. Their percentage is around 0,1 percent.

**The percentage of Jews**, the most ancient minority of Georgia is 0,1.

Percentage in numbers<sup>2</sup>:

- Eastern Orthodox Adherants: 3, 666 233 (83,9 %);
- Catholics – 34, 727 (0,8%);
- Gregorian Church – 171 139 (3,9%);
- Jews – 3 531 (0,1%);
- Muslims – 433 784 (9,9%);
- Protestant Christian, People of Oriental faiths – 33 500 (1%);
- Atheists, Agnostics, Nihilists – 28 631 (0,6%).

## CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil sector in Georgia is strong, numerous and developed enough to fulfill its mission, but its potential is not adequately applied or

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<sup>1</sup> Papuashvili, Nugzar. “Georgia and the World Religions. Review and Glossary”, (in Georgian). Ed. Sozar Subar, Publication of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Supported by Cordaid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

sufficiently activated in that direction. Since the “Rose Revolution” of November 2003 until autumn of 2005 most NGOs and CSOs lost their civic momentum, became more fragmented and localized in poorly connected groups. While open aggression cases towards religious minority groups have significantly diminished, social life is still marred by xenophobia, ethnic nationalism, indirect (occasionally, direct) discrimination of ethnic, religious, gender minorities. Since the revolution, as was expected, the government has incorporated and co-opted NGO activists and leaders, mostly those who actively participated in revolutionary process, but instead of bringing the civil society spirit into the ruling circles exalted by the “people power”, they themselves rather grew into the process of establishment of new bureaucracy. The deeply rooted syndrome of impunity wide spread in power structures had often been encouraged by the top officials, which had brought to numerous violations of human rights, riots at penitentiaries, pressure on judiciary and limitation of free media. Creation of the Georgian NGO Coalition “Civil Society for Democratic Georgia” in late 2005, as well as the first nation-wide Congress of Georgian NGOs held on July 25, 2006 demonstrated that civil sector of Georgia has enough potential and experience to activate Georgian society towards ensuring human rights, peaceful resolution of conflicts<sup>1</sup>, building of democratic institutions and gender equity.

After the “Rose Revolution” it became clear that the government was committed to address the most notorious cases of direct religious violence condemned by the international community (note the spectacular detainment in March 2004 and the subsequent prolonged trial of the extremist priest Mkalavishvili), and, at the same time, to create the impression that the core problems are

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<sup>1</sup> A concise account of the evolution of conflict and the peace process may be found in Khutsishvili, George. *The Abkhazia and South Ossetia Cases: Spoilers in the Nearly Collapsed Peace Process*, in Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond, eds., “Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution”, Tokyo: UNU Press, 2006. Cf. also MacFarlane, Neil with Khutsishvili, George. *Ethnic Conflict in Georgia*, in co-authorship with Neil MacFarlane, in S.A. Giannakos, ed., “Ethnic Conflict: Religion, Identity and Politics”. Athens: Ohio University Press /Swallow Press, 2002.

addressed. Situation was “balanced” in a way that the civil society’s reaction to the cases of violation of religious minorities’ rights became more indifferent, and the whole issue has been transformed, rather than regulated.

### **GEORGIAN ETHNOCENTRISM**

Ethnocentrism is a feature characterizing all peoples, although the degree and forms of manifesting it vary. For representatives of some nations, it is popular to tirelessly prove the antiquity of the nation or its superiority over the rest; others look for fellow countrymen among the relatives of world celebrities; and for some, the feeling of one’s uniqueness and “superiority” eventually results in hatred towards other nations<sup>1</sup>.

Generally, representatives of a given culture assess representatives of other nations according to the criteria and value system existing in their own culture. Few would want to claim that ethnic groups actually are all the same in all their qualities. Ethnic and cultural pride begins with the emphasis of differences and quickly progresses to claims of superiority in some respect or another. Superiority may be difficult to judge, but differences can have clear consequences for different kinds of enterprises or ways of life<sup>2</sup>. And each difference has a potential danger of creating ethnocentric stereotypes. In the long run, we can consider ethnocentrism as a defensive mechanism that contributes to increasing one’s self-assessment via idealizing the particularities of the main identifier – one’s own nation.

Ethnocentrism is quite obvious among Georgians. Moreover, Georgian ethnocentrism has a rather individual, although not a very unique form. A Georgian may calmly accept the fact that other nations (especially if they are big and strong) are richer, more hard-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Nizharadze, George. “Political Behaviors in Georgia”, “Epoka”, #2, 2001, pp. 6-17 (in Georgian).

<sup>2</sup> Kelley L. Ross, “Ethnic Prejudice, Stereotypes, Discrimination, and the Free Market, Note 1” <http://www.friesian.com/discrim.htm>

working and even smarter. However, a Georgian will always think that all these successful nations lack something very important, the so-called “zest” or the essential understanding of life<sup>1</sup>. This initially places foreigners on a lower level, thus explaining the non-violent, friendly and arrogant-ironic attitude Georgians often demonstrate towards representatives of other nations. In this respect, Georgian ethnocentrism is similar to the British one, although there is an obvious difference between the two cultures. As the British people used to say about a foreigner they liked, “it is not his fault he was not born a Brit”.

At the same time, Georgian self-assessment has another important – moral – dimension that in the Soviet times served as a “proof” of inferiority of Russians, but later expanded to the opposition Caucasus tradition versus Western globalism. A dominating “elder brother”, actually a colonialist could not be confronted in a public debate, but there was a substitute revenge in understanding he/she had no moral right to rule Georgians not only because of the latter’s older nationhood, deeper tradition and higher ethnic culture, but particularly because Russians had wild drinking habits while all Georgians observed highly structured and organized table rules; moreover, Russian women involved in love affairs in a spontaneous and uncultured way while for Georgian girls and even older unmarried women virginity was a high value. Western cultural intervention – at least at a public discourse level – has replaced Russian in post-Soviet time as a threat to the national moral tradition: “We may have poor infrastructure and broken roads in our cities, but at least we would never allow a homosexual to be elected a mayor”.

One has to point out, that at some point in history, Georgian ethnocentrism played a positive role: from one hand, it contributed to preserving national identity; from the other side, it resulted in ambivalent but respectful attitude of the big nations such as the Turks, Iranians and Russians toward Georgians (Victor Turner calls this phenomena “the power of the weak”).

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<sup>1</sup> Nizharadze, George, *ibid.*

## **NATIONAL “PRIDE” OF GEORGIANS: HOW IT EVOLVED AND CHANGED OVER TIME**

Georgia’s history and culture has formed under stable influence of Christianity, the strongest national identifier. Today 94% Georgian respondents claim to belong to the Georgian Orthodox Church, while only 18.5% consider themselves really religious.<sup>1</sup> Even in the Soviet atheist times all tourist guides to Tbilisi and all Georgian toastmasters addressing foreigners pointed out vicinity of the three old churches – Christian, Muslim and Jewish – in one and the same block of the old town as a sign of historically proven tolerance, pluralistic tradition and peaceful coexistence of religions in the country. The Soviet Georgia – referring to an ancient tradition – had also boasted of freest and most hospitable atmosphere among other Union republics.

During Soviet times, Georgian nation had many things to be proud of. Apart from the shadow economy that kept the lifestyle of Georgians on a relatively good level, Georgians were respected by both the Russians and Westerners for their arts, sports and relatively outspoken movies. The period covering 60<sup>th</sup> though 80<sup>th</sup> witnessed the growth of interest of other Soviet republics and Western countries towards Georgia. This interest was mainly caused by the “not quite Soviet” way of life as opposed to other republics. Indeed, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was probably the most carefree period in the history of Georgia. The arts and sports were in the bloom, money was made relatively easy, and visitors enjoyed cheap wine and expressed surprise at the “non-Soviet” atmosphere. The Soviet government was criticized without lowering one’s voice and nobody imagined that all this would ever come to an end.<sup>2</sup>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, all the above-mentioned features vanished, leaving the nation lost and disoriented. Georgia

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<sup>1</sup> The Role of Orthodoxy in the States and Societies of Georgia and Russia (Materials of the Georgian-Russian Conference). Tbilisi: Heinrich Boell Foundation, 2004, p.106.

<sup>2</sup> Nizharadze, George. “The End of the Age of Nomenklatura in Georgia”. “Enough!” The Rose Revolution in the Republic of Georgia 2003, Ed. Karumidze, Zurab, Wertsch, James V. Nova Science Publishers, Inc, New York.

became a poor and less interesting country. The nationalist movement in the early 90s was an attempt by the people to regain the psychological support through finding other options for self-identification such as historical myths and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Eventually, this process had fuelled ethnic confrontations, resulted in the growing levels of xenophobia and religious intolerance.

### **GEORGIAN NATIONALISM, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES**

Scholars mention that minor ethnic groups living on the territory of Georgia have often been affected by the Georgian nationalism. This does not necessarily mean that the relationships escalate into conflict. There are numerous cases of peaceful coexistence of Georgians and other ethnic groups, such as Kurds and remarkably, Russians. Over the past years, though, ethnic nationalism caused a number of serious problems. Here, one has to recall the development of ethno-political conflicts in early 1990s, the birth and rapid growth of religious and ethnic intolerance of the following years, with religious intolerance reaching its peak in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Georgia, a nation that praised itself for the historically tolerant attitude towards different religions, suddenly became a battleground for a radical excommunicated priest and his followers who announced a holy war against the Protestant minorities, harassing and burning their literature and assaulting them verbally. This criminal activity was terminated once Mr. Mkalavishvili was detained, although the general attitude towards religious minorities remains quite unfriendly. Until recently, the police has often been demonstrating passiveness when it came to defending the rights of religious minorities against the aggressive representatives of the majority. This problem has been especially acute in the regions, where local priests have increasingly strong influence over the village population. Among the reasons of intolerance demonstrated towards “the other”, experts point to the fear of proselytizing external powers.

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Some experts believe that a seemingly sudden outburst of religious intolerance was a direct result of the Soviet tradition that derived from the Soviet-style colonialism. To be more precise, it was the hierarchical nature of the Soviet policy (“nomenclature”) that divided nations and groups into categories. What one can often see in relations between ethnic and religious groups is the division into superior and inferior groups. Moreover, the division is obvious on the levels of both majority-minority relations and minority-minority relations. Often, such an attitude results in psychological problems in children. For example, local children of Orthodox families are often afraid of the protestant community as they are told by their adults that they are dangerous, threatening, etc.

### **GEORGIA AND THE SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM**

As mentioned before, after the fall of the Soviet empire, Georgia lost a number of privileges, suddenly becoming a poor and disoriented society that attempted to rehabilitate its self-identification though turning to history and religion. The school system, meanwhile, experienced significant changes as one ideology – Communist, was replaced by the other – ethno-nationalist. This change was indeed dramatic, affecting the attitudes within the educational system and often resulting in discrimination of individuals who did not fit into the “new wave”. Until today, there are numerous state and officially secular schools in Georgia that promote public prayers in classrooms. For example, some public schools in Kutaisi perform public prayers in classrooms, with all the religious symbols such as the candles, icons and headscarves for females being fully observed. This is a clear violation of the rights of minority children, as well as disrespect of the key value of a secular state: the separation of church and state, and the division of public and private spheres. Also, the quality of teaching subjects such as the history of religion is generally low, as the majority of teachers lack professional skills. One can often hear a joke that “teachers who used to teach “Scientific Communism” and “Scientific Atheism” during Soviet times suddenly shifted to teaching religion and national values. Indeed,

the most ardent fighters for the cultural identity of Georgia have been schoolteachers who are in the late 40s to 60s, i.e. those who were used to living in a system with a single ideology. For the majority of this group, educational system should be inseparable from the religious one. Moreover, many teachers are ready and willing to let the Church guard the spiritual development of the children.

The very idea of Georgian Orthodox Church as a savior of cultural and national identity reemerged in late 80s when Georgia was fighting for its independence. The Georgian society identified the Church in the context of the past, perceiving it as a bridge connecting the nation with its historic heritage. This tendency was equally obvious in Serbia where the Church played a decisive role in the process of formation of nationalism (even the triadic “fatherland, mothertongue, faith” – a statement belonging to the most revered Georgian writer and scholar of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ilia Chavchavadze – has an analogue in Serbian tradition). Indeed, in both cases, cultural tradition and identity were reduced to one single model. In Georgia, the idea of Georgian national identity how it formed before the collapse of Soviet system, gave the majority of Georgians the feeling of their exclusiveness and, in a way, superiority (this tendency has relatively diminished in the recent years though). The recent comment of the group of university students on the essential qualities of a university rector clearly demonstrates that nationalism is still an issue. The group of students pointed out that in order for a university rector to be successful, he/she has to be “definitely a Georgian and Orthodox Christian”.

Due to the weaknesses of education system, Georgian schoolchildren are generally unaware of the cultural role of ethnic and religious groups living in their country. The lack of awareness, in turn, paves the way to prejudices and stereotypic thinking. For example, only a few individuals are aware of the fact that the old mosques of Ajara are unique in the entire world, as they are constructed of wood. And when one of the organizations initiated a sight-seeing school trip for young Georgians from Bolnisi to visit Ajara, the schoolchildren were asked to go inside the mosque to see the inner

design. However, all of them refused to even come near the construction, explaining that they were Orthodox, thus having no right to enter the religious establishment belonging to a different faith. Naturally, such as attitude will eventually have negative results if the mainstream group is missing out the heritage of its own country and ignoring the culture of its fellow citizens.

*Changes as compared to pre-revolution period:*

Group	Negative Aspects	Positive Aspects	Tendency
Ethnic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-perceived as discriminated;</li> <li>• European Conventions neglected by local authorities;</li> <li>• Low-rated in social stratification: affects access to qualified jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Convention on Minority Rights ratified by Parliament;</li> <li>• Compact settlement areas prioritized;</li> <li>• International programs implemented.</li> </ul>	To worse (indicators: low social activeness, marginalization, high migration).
Religious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No law on religion;</li> <li>• Insecure, unprotected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law on NGO registration;</li> <li>• Central government's tolerant attitude.</li> </ul>	To better (indicators: social activeness, new organizations).
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide-spread domestic violence;</li> <li>• Women's low participation in key positions, decision-making;</li> <li>• Aggression and antagonism towards sexual minorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International conventions (such as UN Resolution 1325) ratified;</li> <li>• Organized women's networks active.</li> </ul>	Unchanged.
Internal migrants (IDPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fading prospect of return;</li> <li>• Social assistance curbed;</li> <li>• IDPs disenfranchised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Strategy towards IDPs integration announced.</li> </ul>	To worse.

**CONCLUSION**

Development of democratic institutions and the rule of law remain main objectives to achieve the national goal of turning Georgia into a stable and economically strong liberal-democratic state. The so-called "Revolution of Roses" (November 2003) was hoped to have opened a new stage in Georgian history by launching deep-reaching reforms in all major spheres, although it also became clear from the very start that this would be curbed by many obstacles. Apart from

the difficult legacy left by the Soviet totalitarian system and failures of the post-Soviet period – ethno-territorial conflicts, ruined infrastructure, rampant corruption and the fragmented society – there are many deeply rooted problems related to mentality and habits of behavior, including those related to ethno-cultural and psychological nature that manifest themselves as: xenophobia and discriminative perception of non-titular ethnic groups, aggression and intolerance towards religious, sexual and other minorities, gender issues and domestic violence (especially in countryside). Modernization of social life that would bring the country closer to European standards, bringing countryside closer to the level of main urban centers, implementation of the strategic plan of development of capital Tbilisi and other important goals cannot be compatible with retarded and harmful norms of behavior, along with underdeveloped ability of collaborative action.

2006

29 September, 2006

GPPAC Meeting,

by George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Professor, Director, ICN  
Regional Representative for South Caucasus

# 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to have an opportunity to meet you here and present the South Caucasus states. I am happy to talk on behalf of civil society of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, on behalf of all those civil society actors who developed

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By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Regional Representative for South Caucasus, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), Tbilisi, Georgia, 29 September, 2006.

## PRESENTATION FOR GPPAC MEMBERS: SOUTH CAUCASUS

I am glad to have an opportunity to meet you here and present the South Caucasus states. I am happy to talk on behalf of civil society of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, on behalf of all those civil society actors who developed for the last years the South Caucasus regional process, working on urgent issues of the region, and particularly conflict prevention/resolution and peacebuilding through Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict.

In this presentation, I would like to stress the problems and challenges that the South Caucasus states have faced for the last decade, as well as opportunities and the prospects for their development in close cooperation with each other and international community.

In early 1990s South Caucasus states – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia gained their independence and sovereignty and a long process of creating statehood, developing democratic governance and liberal (market) economy has started. This transition from communist ideology to democratic values appeared to be extremely hard

and painful process. By that period Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were extremely fragile states with no tradition of modern statehood and political culture and with widespread informal business activities and corruption. Since early 90s there have been enormous qualitative and quantitative changes in South Caucasus societies:

- Process of democratization and institutional reforms of political, military, economic and social systems in compliance with international standards and their gradual integration into the international community;
- Development of various strategically important economic projects with vast international assistance and support (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) and energy resources (oil/gas resources along with pipeline routes like Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan);
- Armed conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and in Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), which reached high-intensity stage and later grew into a protracted “frozen” stage;
- Humanitarian crisis characterized by the vast flow of refugees and IDPs in the aftermath of regional conflicts as well as the exodus of population (including intellectual capital) abroad for better opportunities and life conditions.

Inevitable but still severe post-Soviet social-economic collapse related with wide-spread corruption.

Nowadays South Caucasus states experience an acute period of political, economic, social and cultural readjustment and are at the crossroads of their strategic choice. The region has a key geo-strategic location and a chance to obtain economic importance. All that made it the object of interest to regional/international actors. The region’s increasing strategic importance, significant oil resources and its potential role as a transit route between Europe and Asia made international powers and institutions to become involved in regional political and economic processes and actively participate in shaping regional security system.

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are the recipients of huge political and economic support and assistance from the international community. The US and European Union made much efforts to assist these states in defining their international political/economic agenda and encourage regional cooperation/interaction by promoting various regional projects; international organizations and donors highly contributed in addressing the regional problems through various programs.

Among above-mentioned issues, the most arduous challenge appeared to be armed conflicts that took up enormous amount of national human and economic resources, on one hand, and aggravated number of socio-economic and political hardship, on the other one.

- Unresolved conflicts still decisively influence the political life of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and hamper the process of their further democratization;
- The regions uncontrolled by federal authorities have provided a solid ground for corruption, lack of transparency and isolation of civil control over the decision making process;
- The conflicts in Georgia have hardened the relations with Russian Federation. Unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh breeds tensed relations between Armenia and Turkey, which altogether seriously slows down the process of integration in the region.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs flown from the conflict zones, and the issue of their resettlement are still a serious social problem.

After the ceasefire agreements over the conflicts were reached (over Nagorno-Karabakh in May 1994; over Abkhazia in July 1993 – yet broken in September 1993 and regained in April 1994, and over South Ossetia in June 1992), much effort has been spent by the international community towards the final resolution of the conflicts, which mainly faced the hard-edged and polarized approaches of the conflicting parties.

South Caucasus states currently strive towards the non-violent resolution of conflicts by peaceful means, however, there is no complete confidence in the stability and irreversibility of the peace process. The society of “no war, no peace” completely differs from the society living in the state of war and the one living in the state of peace. These conflicts have had their deep impact on the societies awaking latent negative feelings, strengthening existing negative stereotypes and nationalism in general; these conflicts shake the very foundation of peace and stability and hamper economic development of the region.

These problems are of high concern not only the regional states but also international actors. Geographic proximity, energy projects, problems of trafficking and terrorism make the South Caucasus Europe’s most problematic periphery. Unresolved conflicts, emigration and transnational crime, small arms penetrate Western Europe and create security problems in Europe’s Neighborhood. In the light of these perspectives, the challenge for the international organizations and donors is to become more involved in the process of dealing with regional problems, in particular while resolving the existing conflicts, and to contribute to the stability and development of the region.

The regional conflicts are frozen for last ten-twelve years but the risk of a resumption of violence is possible with much worse implications. For sure, the basic responsibility for the escalation of the situation will be on conflicting parties but one of the important factors that could aggravate the situation would be a lack of attention on the part of international agencies. Their role in ensuring that the transition of power is smooth, peaceful and democratic is great. By building democratic governance as well as the development of civil society institutions, international agencies can help ensure political stability and development in the South Caucasus. Without such assistance and support the risk of violence escalation will be high. A special attention should be played not only on the resolution of ongoing conflicts but on high risk zones, like Javakheti region of Georgia (populated by ethnic Armenians). The situation is



under control there but activities aimed at early warning and prevention are encouraged. Several triggering factors (negative attitude of the population to the withdrawal of Russian base in Akhalkalaki, the possible repatriation of Meskhetian Turks, clan struggles, and increased nationalistic sentiments) could destabilize the situation. So, programs aimed at neutralizing all these factors should be implemented and the assistance of international organizations and foundations is urgent.

The Minsk Group of the OSCE currently co-chaired by France, Russia and the US, has been facilitating negotiations since 1994. After a decade of talks, a new format of meetings, the Prague process, involving direct bilateral contacts was launched. However, for twelve years after a ceasefire, the parties have been unable to reach any clear improvement and successful breakthrough. Whatever is being done at the internationally mediated negotiations, at ground level resumed war appears a real possibility.

In early June 2006 Azerbaijan and Armenian Presidents met in Bucharest in the presence of the French and Russian co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group to pursue a “peaceful, negotiated settlement” but failed again to break the stalemate in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process. Key elements of the proposed settlement package include: the withdrawal of the Armenia-backed Nagorno-Karabakh forces from the occupied districts of Azerbaijan; the deployment of international peacekeepers; the return of IDPs; and the re-opening of trade and communication links. It was also suggested to determine the status of Nagorno-Karabakh by an internationally sanctioned referendum with exclusive participation of Karabakh Armenians and Azeris, but after the implementation of the above measures. Today Armenia and Azerbaijan remain divided on vital points. Azerbaijan does not accept any compromise of its territorial integrity, nor does it agree that Nagorno-Karabakh’s population alone can vote on determining its final status. Armenia is not willing to support withdrawal from the seven occupied districts around Nagorno-Karabakh, or allow the return of Azerbaijan IDPs to Nagorno-Karabakh, until the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The two leaders face growing pressure from mediators to reach a framework agreement on a gradual settlement of the Karabakh conflict but the presidents are not ready to reach an agreement as the societies behind them are not ready for a compromise. Armenian and Azerbaijani public opinion on how to resolve the conflict is as divided as ever. It seems that people in both communities are not prepared for any agreement. Karabakh Armenians' expressions of confidence about their independent future, and Karabakh Azeris' frustration and anger about their situation as displaced persons are deeply at odds. Neither community appears prepared to agree to the kind of steps toward resolution of the conflict currently being considered by the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides. The reality shows that Azeris and Armenians living around the conflict zone are highly dependent on each other but at the same time they are split by mistrust and hatred.

The resumption of negotiation process became of top political discussions in Georgia in late 2005 with wide participation of international organizations (OSCE, UN) and other key actors. In 2005-2006 Plans for Peaceful Resolution of Georgian-South Ossetian, Georgian-Abkhazian conflicts (so called "Road Maps") were presented by Georgian President. These Plans feature a substantial amount of autonomy but this was not enough to arouse interest in opening talks among the leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The leaderships of the breakaway regions consider no alternative to its independent development. The current negotiations are in an impasse and the Georgian government is seeking to find another international forum for the negotiations as they believe the current distribution of interests and powers are not effective. Georgian President has called on the UN and the EU to become more involved in settling the situation.

Despite all difficulties international community highly believes in progress in these conflicts resolution processes and expresses its readiness to contribute to this process (for example, in June 2006 the OSCE member states adopted a decision to share EUR 10 mln for the rehabilitation of South Ossetia. This program should force

positive tendencies in Georgian-South Ossetian resolution process and can become an impetus for more effective dialogue).

South Caucasus states are not self-reliant in economic terms and they need strong political support and assistance while performing political and economic reforms and strengthening democratic institutions. Thus, the role of external (regional, international) actors is huge but internal economic, political factors and human resources remain significant. These states are still fragile and they need foreign patronage and support. All these states are highly related to the interests and relationships with external actors. And this moment is clearly visible in the processes of political succession, and the international influence in this respect is extremely important.

Thus, in such a complicated and too tensed political bargaining the role of civil society emerges vitally important. Conflicts could not be discussed and resolved just on political level by the governmental officials. The image of the region as a constant conflicts zone only proves that it is necessary to work on the decrease of the enemy image and negative psychological characteristics of the Azerbaijanis in the Armenian society. The non-official diplomacy is based on the assumption that there are things governments can do that people cannot; and there are things people can do that governments cannot. This is one of the influential mechanisms, which, unfortunately, is not largely applied in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process. The factor of civil society implementing non-official diplomacy currently has a great significance in the process of many conflicts resolution processes in the world. NGOs of certain social groups should be involved in the process of non-official diplomacy.

Conflict settlement is extremely sensitive and difficult process that needs the preparedness of the societies in conflict, it requires confidence building through dialogue. Civil societies of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia perceive their current state of relations in the region as an opportunity to achieve and strengthen long term peace since the transformation of “no war, no peace” situation into a “positive peace” becomes the most important condition for conflict prevention. The prevention of conflict can be achieved through:

strengthening democratic governance, development of civil society, and humanitarian assistance that have been the major spheres of support by the international organizations for the last years. Supporting the democratic developments is essential for maintaining peace and stability and preventing future tensions and conflicts. In the area of civil society development, it is important to pave the way for their inclusion in the decision making process. Real civil society can only develop if they participate in the decision making process and have real influence on the government. So, there is a high need to assist programs that aimed at participation of NGOs in designing and analyzing policy proposals and their involvement in negotiation process. In this respect, educational system should be developed. Investments in educational projects, conflict resolution training, tolerance and peaceful coexistence should be increased. Programs on building confidence measures, intercultural and ethnic understanding are seriously needed to break the ethnic stereotypes and image of enemy and promote dialogue. Humanitarian assistance remained important especially for IDPs.

2006

In Armenia the state constantly keeps the society distanced from the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, showing an apparent reluctance to initiate discussions with civil society entities, Armenian NGO's have had a very little room to influence the decision making processes. However, Armenian NGO sector has paid an attention to the issues related to conflict and further prevention of its escalation.

In Georgia civil society efforts in post-conflict reconciliation have been substantial and, at some stages, even successful. Activity by NGO sector in Georgia for confidence building measures between Georgian and Abkhaz, Georgian and South Ossetian communities had an influence on the communication and cooperation between the sides within the framework of internationally supported initiatives. But some confidence and trust between Georgian and South Ossetian communities achieved due to intense efforts by civil society actors was greatly destroyed by the developments that took place in Summer 2004. This miscalculated attempt to defreeze conflict in South Ossetia became a serious test for the country: the situation

in conflict zone was escalated, the miniaturization was resumed (?) and, finally, the level of trust and interaction between the communities that was reached for the last twelve years was thrown back.

Periodically, Georgian governmental structures call for encouraging the civil society initiatives on conflict resolution issue and envisaging broad consultations with NGOs working on conflict prevention issues but it cannot be regarded as effective, consecutive and sustainable process.

In Azerbaijan, NGO sector is the least supported from (better, encouraged by) the state, highly attached to the government and under its strong control. However, some NGOs and public activists could manage to contribute positively to the peaceful process.

Establishment and active participation of civil society institutions remains one of the main factors in reaching long-lasting peace among communities in the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The extent to which mistrust between peoples involved in ethno-political conflict is deeply rooted in history or is embedded in a culture is spontaneously reproduced among conflicts. Each conflict is unique with its own subjective characteristics that often have important behavioral consequences. Therefore, in deep-rooted ethnic disputes conflict management strategies are not adequate. Conflicts cannot be resolved to everyone's interests but also the antagonistic attitudes and relationships between the adversaries are transformed from negative to positive. Thus, one of the most important yet the least understood aspect of peace processes in the South Caucasus is the importance of conflict prevention initiatives usually outlined by international community and carried out by the civil society institutions – NGOs and mass media.

NGOs and civil society groups in the unrecognized entities/conflict zones can play an important role in decreasing the enemy image in their communities and promoting public diplomacy efforts. Civil society could also play a crucial role in terms of ensuring regional security. This problem is also linked to the militarization of the region. People in the South Caucasus are still highly concerned about

the militarization due to the elusive peace and the frozen conflicts. People certainly dream of peace though yet do not feel they can quit their arms. Indicating other “satisfiers” of security and clarifying the role of civil society on this process could be one of the outputs of international organizations.

However, once again it should be mentioned that despite the strong potential, NGO sector has, it still needs to be strengthened and at the moment lacks the possibility of influence and control of the Government institutions and protection of the citizens. There are several reasons for that. First of all it is the financial constraint the NGOs have. The latter are not sustainable and do not have permanent sources of finances, which could allow them to build strategic plans for their future activities on one hand and rapidly react to the particular issue on the other. Financial shortcomings of these organizations also affect the human potential, since the members and staff do not see the NGOs for a sustainable source of their economic prosperity and do not fully concentrate their efforts but look for other financial possibilities. Secondly, it is the low level of cooperation among the NGOs that is caused by personal ambitions as well as some mistrust.

Image of the enemy, negative stereotypes and mutual distrust that exist between conflicting parties should be overcome and the role of civil actors is substantial in it. Dealing with negative stereotypes at the social level is possible under the conditions of positive communications between the parties to the conflict, regional cooperation both on state and social levels. State policies supposed to neutralize negative stereotypes (particularly among young people) could play a very significant role. Overcoming negative stereotypes and the image of enemy with the means of wider social cooperation is an important aspect of conflict prevention. The image of the whole South Caucasus region as a permanent conflict zone proves that it is necessary to work on the decrease of the enemy image and negative psychological elements.

NGOs focused on conflict management may enhance conflict prevention tools between the conflicting parties. These organiza-

tions aim at assisting conflict resolution by surpassing the logic of the power politics and encouraging communication, understanding and collaboration between antagonistic communities. Public diplomacy makes possible the involvement of civil society in conflict resolution activities, along with the efforts made by national governments. That is one of the most influential mechanisms that needs to be strengthened and actively applied to peace processes in all South Caucasus states. Integration of NGOs within regional networks serves as an important link. NGO regional networks oriented on conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities refer to the problem of refugees/IDPs, social security and human rights issues etc. Women's NGOs and network play a significant role not only in achieving gender equity, but in peace studies and conflict prevention.

Mass media is another instrument in conflict prevention. They can play both positive and negative role in the process. The negative aspect implies stream of information aggravating hatred and hostilities between parties, while positive aspect brings tolerance and understanding. In the South Caucasus reality mass media mostly plays rather a destructive role in the process of conflict prevention and negatively influences the conflict potential. In many cases mass media dehumanizes the image of parties involved in conflict and encourages military means of conflict resolution while it should play an active role in the stipulation of a peacebuilding process.

The other key issue is the development and introduction of similar education technologies aimed at strengthening cooperation of scientific-educational centers as strong actors of conflict prevention in the region. This role becomes more important under the conditions of inefficient activity of formal international structures and peacemaking agencies. Establishment of mechanisms for preparing specialists in conflict and peace issues may contribute to conflict prevention processes and peacebuilding. Education and training programs in schools based on delivering skills for promoting tolerance and non-violence means of resolution need serious encouragement and support. Publishing is another strong mechanism: it

could also help balance the negative impact of mass media covering the disputed issues.

Private and economic sector is an important part of conflict prevention and the peacebuilding process. The development of economic cooperation and integration can stipulate positive economic changes in each country, providing people with new opportunities. At present the entrepreneurs have the greatest interest in realization of economic interests and creating new markets instead of wide-spread smuggling.

2006

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Push the Caucasian countries to accelerate the democratic reforms in their country. Democratic society will start to find itself in contrary to a conflict, urging the Government to take more effective steps towards its resolution.

The international community should initiate and actively promote a process designed to lead to a permanent solution of the regional conflicts. The international community can play a vital role in initiating and facilitating confidence-building measures, a political dialogue, and negotiations. Coordinate continued international support for conflict prevention. Assist exiting NGOs and support independent media. Establish and strengthen contacts in Nagorno-Karabakh NGO sector working in conflict prevention area.

The international community should use existing leverages to encourage progress towards a solution. An international strategy of sticks and carrots should ensure that the parties reach agreement on a permanent solution through peaceful means.

Additional assistance should be made available to support the democratization process in South Caucasus states, to strengthen civil society, and to improve the social and economic situation in conflict zones. Although democratization and strengthening of civil society will in themselves not solve the conflicts, they are the indispensable basis for any sustainable solution. International support – both financial and political – should be provided to the indepen-



dent media, the local NGO sector, human rights projects, alternative political voices, and efforts to enhance communications between different civic groups. To normalize the social and economic situation in conflict zones, direct international assistance should be given for education, health care, income-generating activities, and the return of refugees.

2006

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Chairman and the Founding Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia. Published in *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution*, Edited by Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond, United Nations University Press, 2006.

Oliver Richmond

## THE ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA CASES: SPOILERS IN A NEARLY COLLAPSED PEACE PROCESS

The fall of the Soviet Union and subsequent liberation of the 15 Soviet republics, which became newly independent states (NIS) in 1991, was marked by upheaval and insurgencies. In a number of cases this was a defining dynamic, particularly in those parts of the former “empire” that contained ethnically defined autonomous constituencies. These included Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, Transdniestria in Moldova, and Chechnya in Russia. Security and self-identification problems in this rapidly changing environment concerned not only the NIS but also former autonomous entities that were exploited by pro-Soviet forces in order to hinder the NIS’ course to independent statehood. Most of the disputes between the union of republics-turned-states and their autonomous entities ended with violent clashes and the emergence of secessionist quasi states seeking independence from their former “patrons”. They remained unrecognized by the international community, however.

In Abkhazia and South Ossetia the conflict has passed a high-intensity phase with armed hostilities (1992-1993 in Abkhazia and 1991-1992 in South Ossetia) and large-scale humanitarian crisis (almost 300,000 internally displaced persons and refugees, the absolute majority of which in the Abkhazian case were ethnic Georgians). These states have now entered a protracted, frozen situation of “no peace, no war”. Yet the corresponding peacebuilding process has never moved beyond an inadequate and undeveloped stage. In order to understand the key dynamics of the peace process and the spoiling phenomenon in the Abkhazian and South Ossetian cases, we need to examine the major stages of the dispute.

The Abkhazia conflict<sup>1</sup> is deeply rooted in the imperialist geopolitics of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, and from the dawn of communist rule alienation between the Abkhaz and Georgians grew.<sup>2</sup> A significant part of Abkhazia is a subtropical Black Sea recreational area, which attracted support for the Abkhaz secessionists from the Russian military and its political establishment at the first signs of Soviet decline and the rise of a Georgian national liberation movement. The alienation of the Abkhaz from the Georgians grew as the view prevailed in Georgian historiography that Abkhazia was historically an alias for Western Georgia, while Abkhaz insisted on their distinct historical and ethnic origin. Significantly, Abkhazian sources blamed not Russian or Soviet imperialist policy but Geor-

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to the conflict, ethnic Abkhaz people (80,000-90,000) represented 18 per cent of the population of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic in Soviet Georgia and 2 per cent of the entire population of Georgia, according to the 1989 Census. The 1993 ethnic cleansing of the ethnic Georgian population (around 260,000) allowed the Abkhaz people to obtain demographic control in Abkhazia. UN-supervised return of internally displaced persons has been managed so far only in the border territory of the Gali district of Abkhazia. The Abkhaz people barely form a majority even in the present depopulated seceded territory, along with Russians, Armenians, Greeks, and other local minority groups.

<sup>2</sup> The South Caucasus territories were incorporated into Tzarist Russia during the nineteenth century. The First World War and the subsequent revolutionary process in Russia allowed Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan briefly to restore their independent statehood in 1918, aborted by Red Army intervention and the following seven decades of Soviet rule. The first tension in Abkhazia dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (the Samurzakhan crisis of the Mukhajirs).

gian nationalism – very weak and undeveloped until the late 1980s – for systematic assimilative measures against the Abkhaz. Eventually, as Georgian-Abkhaz relations were aggravated by the new Georgian leaders' ethno-nationalism, the whole dispute was manipulated by the advocates of an imperial revival to create maximum alienation between Georgians and Abkhaz.

The nature of the Georgian-Osset dispute was significantly different. Georgian-Osset relations developed in a peaceful and tolerant manner: Ossets were among the best-integrated ethnic groups in the highly diverse Georgian society. The first signs of Georgian-Osset tension were visible as early as the 1920s, after the establishment of Soviet rule, but never led to a secessionist platform until the awkward nationalist policies of the first post-Soviet Georgian leader, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, triggered the emerging conflict in late 1990.<sup>1</sup> Inevitably, the struggle of a smaller community for higher autonomy and broader sovereignty in a transitional period turned into ethnic intolerance towards Georgians and a growing pro-Russian mood. In view of the growing Georgian-Osset tension, President Gamsakhurdia later made efforts to avoid conflict escalation in Abkhazia by offering the Abkhaz privileges to secure their support, but it was too late.

### **ACTORS AND PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT'S DEVELOPMENT AND IN MEDIATION**

As in most other cases, conflicts in Georgia involved multiple parties, both inside and outside the country, which had varying degrees of influence. The parties to the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts at their high-intensity stages (respectively, 1992-1993 and 1991-1992) were as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> On 18 November 1990, in the still existing but fatally weakened Soviet Union, the newly elected Georgian parliament abolished the South Ossetia Autonomous Oblast as "an artificial entity implanted by the Bolsheviks to facilitate their imperialist national policy of divide and rule".

- The secessionist ethnocratic elite of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic (led by the Supreme Council chaired by Vladislav Ardzinba, elected while the Soviet Union still existed), which was primarily responsible for the escalation of anti-Georgian sentiment in Abkhaz society.

After the armed conflict began, a group of anti-secessionist ethnic Georgian deputies of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia, led by deputy chairman Tamaz Nadareishvili, formed the so-called “legitimate government of Abkhazia in exile” based in Tbilisi.

- The secessionist ethnocratic elite of the South Ossetia Autonomous Oblast (led by the Soviet-elected Supreme Council chaired by Torez Kulumbegov). They had not been resolutely against the idea of living in a common state with Georgians. However, the nationalist slogans of the first president of independent Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, triggered the confrontation with South Ossets and enhanced their nationalist agenda.

- Georgia’s State Council (Eduard Shevardnadze, Tengiz Sigua, and Jaba Ioseliani) and the interim government. The State Council was led by the former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who replaced the ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia after March 1992 and was responsible for the military inspection that led to the escalation of hostilities in Abkhazia in August 1992, and engaged later in the unsuccessful post-conflict negotiation process.

- The Confederation of the Mountainous Peoples of the Caucasus. This was a Moscow-influenced paramilitary and political association in the North Caucasus, with Chechen and Cossack regiments most active during the Georgian-Abkhaz war, which provided the main offensive force to achieve the military success of the Abkhaz over the Georgians in September 1993. Pro-Soviet forces in Russia applied “divide-and-rule” policies to weaken the NIS and attempted to facilitate the recreation of the Moscow-dominated union.

- Supporters of the ousted President Gamsakhurdia (or so-called Zviadists). They had a double-standard approach: on the one hand they stressed their patriotic and nationalist agenda, and therefore

rejected the Abkhaz and Osset secessionism; on the other they did everything possible to weaken Shevardnadze's administration, which they declared illegitimate and dubbed as a "junta", and called for instability and even public upheaval in the country. As a result, a temporary alliance with the Abkhaz "rebels" emerged.

Participants in peace negotiations in the "frozen" stage (since 1993 in the Osset case and 1994 in the Abkhaz case) are defined as the parties immediately and necessarily present at the negotiation table, the absence of one of which made any meeting invalid.<sup>1</sup> In the Georgian-Abkhaz dispute those were the official representatives of the Georgian state authorities and the Abkhazia de facto government, the Russian mediation group (sponsored by the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary-General on Georgia and composed by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).<sup>2</sup> In the Georgian-Osset dispute the representatives were the Georgian state authorities, the South Ossetia de facto government, official representatives of the North Ossetia-Alania Republic (part of the Russian Federation adjacent to South Ossetia), and representatives of the federal Russian authorities, including the representative of the CIS peacekeeping forces.

Custodians of the peace process, based on agreement between the so-called "Friends of the UN Secretary-General", in resolution of the conflicts in Georgia have been as follows:

- The OSCE in the South Ossetia case (the OSCE Mission in Georgia has mostly concentrated on South Ossetia).

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<sup>1</sup> The quadrilateral "Chuburhinji" Commission for Abkhazia and quadrilateral "JCC" (Joint Control Commission) for South Ossetia were created. In South Ossetia the permanent participants in negotiations are Georgian, South Osset, North Osset, and Russian official delegations, whose chiefs make a Council of Co-Chairpersons of the Commission.

<sup>2</sup> In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict a special OSCE-sponsored interstate Minsk group was created to monitor and mediate a negotiated solution, but no such permanent group was ever created for the Abkhazia and South Ossetia cases. Rather, an understanding was expressed of Russia's special role and right to mediate and broker negotiations in the Georgian internal conflicts.

- The United Nations in the Abkhazia case (UNOMIG, led by the special representative of the UN Secretary-General).

- The Russian Federation in both cases and throughout the process. The Kremlin has insisted on leading all the peace negotiations in Georgia and exerted pressure on the UN Security Council on decisions relating to Georgia. Russia has set up the peacekeeping forces (officially called the CIS forces) stationed along the Inguri River demarcation line in Abkhazia and at the entrances to the South Osset territory (the Roki tunnel in the north and Ergneti, near Tskhinali, in the south-east). Normally the Russian Federation should act on the mandate and in accordance with the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary-General (five countries – the USA, the UK, France, Germany, and Russia – cooperating in supervision of the peace process in Georgia). In reality that group has delegated its power to Russia, confirming the geopolitical status of Georgia as part of Russia's sphere of influence.

Russian diplomats have often stressed that Georgia is not a sphere of Russia's special interest, and being involved in disputes over minor territories such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia is merely a headache for them. However, the reality proves to be different: the State Duma has repeatedly encouraged Abkhazia and South Ossetia to apply for associated membership in the Russian Federation, whilst most Abkhaz and South Ossets have already obtained Russian passports and citizenship. Russians have also purchased real estate in Abkhazia, and otherwise developed ties with the seceded territories. There have been frequent alerts from the Georgian side that the conflict is really political, not ethnic, and that Russia is really a party to the conflict and therefore cannot act as a mediator.

The Russian State Duma, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, and the Federal Security Service (FSB) expressed support for secessionists; whilst that would normally be a sufficient indication of Russia's deep partiality in another country's internal affairs, it did not prevent the international community from supporting Russia's role as main broker to negotiate peace agreements.

## SPOILERS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

The impact of various kinds of spoiling in peace processes has been studied from different angles. Stedman defines spoilers as “actors who aim to undermine the peace process”;<sup>1</sup> that is, a peace process needs to be ongoing for the spoilers to enter the scene. In the unresolved South Caucasus conflicts – Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia – a peace agreement has never been signed, negotiations are stalled, and the positions of the parties have been “frozen” for years. Nevertheless, the peace process is often considered not only as ongoing, but also as having something to its credit in all these cases. Rather than a collapsed peace agreement (such as cases where signed peace agreements were broken and civil wars renewed), it would be more accurate to speak about a failed or collapsed peace process, especially if agreement has not been achieved in over a decade of negotiations. Yet the mandate of custodians is defined so as to escape such an assessment. As the assessment “no result” is unacceptable, it is always replaced by “the process is ongoing with serious difficulties” – caused, of course, by spoiling behaviour, partly because a custodian of the peace process appears to be a spoiler itself.

The legal basis of any negotiation between the parties to conflict should be international agreements and documents such as UN Security Council resolutions; in this case these documents have acknowledged the territorial integrity of Georgia (an OSCE statement of 1998 acknowledged the fact of ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Abkhazia), but also called for the parties to adhere to peaceful and non-violent ways to negotiate an agreement. The only document so far that realistically assessed the situation and offered a mutually acceptable solution was the so-called Boden’s document (2001), which the Abkhaz side refused even to receive for consideration

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<sup>1</sup> Stedman, Stephen J. 1997. “Spoiler problems in peace processes”, *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2.



and which has never been published.<sup>1</sup> Boden's document offers, as the only realistic solution to the dispute, the incorporation of the Abkhazian state into the federal Georgian state with limited sovereignty but with broad responsibilities delegated by the federal constitution.

### **RESULT OF THE PEACE PROCESS ACCORDING TO THE PARTIES' POSITIONS**

Conflict can be considered as a kind of relationship that involves an incompatibility of goals. The incompatibility of the national projects of Abkhazians and Georgians became the main obstacle on the way to reconciliation. The Abkhaz are agreed in seeking independent statehood of the Republic of Abkhazia, or at least a limited statehood associated with the Russian Federation. Georgians are committed to the return of refugees to Abkhazia and to reincorporating the Abkhazia Republic in the redefined federal Georgian state. The world views of the parties are defined according to this perceived dilemma. International organizations and intellectual think-tanks involved in dispute resolution have been trying to figure out a combination of conditions that would overcome this dilemma and allow the sides to reconcile their positions. But the Abkhazian and Georgian positions, complicated as they may be, are marked with consistency, while the Russian position involves double standards.

### **THE DECLARED AND ACTUAL ABKHAZIAN POSITION**

The sides should commit themselves to non-violent negotiation towards the elaboration of the separation agreement, according to which Georgia agrees to the status of the independent Republic of Abkhazia, adopted by the Abkhazian parliament and based on results of the referendum held in 1999 among the current population of Abkhazia. Georgia must also agree to the terms for return

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<sup>1</sup> Dieter Boden was in the mid 1990s the OSCE head of mission to Georgia, and in the early 2000s chief of UNOMIG.

of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) decided by the Abkhaz authorities.

### **THE DECLARED AND ACTUAL GEORGIAN POSITION**

The sides should commit themselves to non-violent negotiation towards an elaboration of the integration agreement, according to which the de facto Abkhaz and the state Georgian authorities agree on a certain schedule involving the safe return and settlement of all refugees/IDPs to Abkhazia in a limited period of time, and the status of autonomy or limited sovereignty of the Abkhazia Republic within the Georgian federal state.

2006

### **THE DECLARED RUSSIAN POSITION**

Russia respects the internationally recognized territorial integrity of Georgia, and negotiates the parties' agreement towards a mutually acceptable model of reintegration in a common state, or towards any other status acceptable for the parties to conflict and the custodians.

### **THE ACTUAL RUSSIAN POSITION**

Russia supports the inspiration of the Abkhaz to achieve an independent statehood if it is combined with a pro-Russian orientation of Abkhazia. There were several statements of the Russian State Duma on Abkhazia, supporting secessionism and raising the possibility of accepting Abkhazia as an associated member of the Russian Federation. Russia is ready to consider the incorporation of the self-proclaimed Republic of Abkhazia in the Russian Federation if a serious external threat is posed to Russian citizens in Abkhazia, who now represent the majority of Abkhazia's population due to a policy of mass passport provision.

Obviously, there is incompatibility between the positions of the immediate parties to the conflict. Remarkably, there is also incompatibility between the declared and actual positions of the Rus-

sian Federation – a custodian to the peace process and a chief broker/mediator – with regard to the Georgian-Abkhaz dispute.

### **POST-CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT AS PERCEIVED BY SIDES IN THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ DISPUTE**

It is clear that the main sides in the peacebuilding process are the Georgian and Abkhaz societies collectively, whose positions are represented by their respective elite groups. There is high-level social involvement and identification with the conflict cause on both sides. Apart from these main groups, other actors influence the process are parts of Russia's political, military, and economic elite (the most invariant groups throughout the dispute), the USA, the EU, the United Nations, and the OSCE, as well as the IDP community, North Caucasus communities kin to the Abkhaz, and ethnic/demographic groups within Georgian society.<sup>1</sup> In the existing distribution of forces, any peace agreement would have as signatories representatives of the Georgian state authorities and the Abkhazia de facto leadership. Most probably a Russian official representative would also be a signatory to the agreement.

One cannot envisage to a credible extent the future impact of spoiling unless one considers possible scenarios of (post-)conflict development involving the most important factors. In the following analysis, positive and negative scenarios of development in the Abkhazia conflict (eight in total) will be divided into "ideal" and "rational", and these, respectively, divided into "positive ideal" and "negative ideal", "positive rational" and "negative rational", for each of the parties to conflict.

Remarkably, an ideal scenario for Georgians does not mean that it exists for all Georgians. It exists for quantitative (numerous) and qualitative (publicly influential) groups of Georgians, mutually incompatible in a number of attitudes. Some would be satisfied only if they ideally get even with their opponents, while others would

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<sup>1</sup> The Abkhazia Problem Reflected by Public Opinion (Findings of Sociological Surveys). ICCN, Tbilisi. 2002.

be happy only if they ideally reconcile. It certainly implies that the perception and identification of the Abkhazia problem is not uniform for Georgians, and that it represents a difficulty for Georgians themselves to identify this problem. The style chosen in the description of scenarios reflects the discourse of the relevant party to the conflict (e.g. persons who left Abkhazia as a result of war are called “refugees” in Abkhaz scenarios and “IDPs” in Georgian).

### **POSITIVE IDEAL SCENARIO FROM THE GEORGIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Abkhaz actors realize that politically and culturally they have never been essentially different from Georgians, have never constituted a state independent from Georgia, and cannot seek independence from the nation that sheltered them from external domination and supported them during Soviet rule. They admit their struggle cannot be qualified as a national liberation movement, but only a rebellion inspired by separatist groups in Abkhaz society and their Russian and North Caucasian supporters. The ruling Abkhazian political elite group must change their position or abandon political life. Russia weakens/disintegrates so much that it is unable to support separatist regimes (Russia changing its attitude is unimaginable in this scenario). The Abkhaz publicly and officially express their regret for the rebellion, and offer an apology for the mass ethnic cleansing of ethnic Georgians they and their allies executed in 1992-1993 and in following incidents. Unambiguous acknowledgement follows that Abkhazia will never be in a position to create an independent state, supported by a mass demonstrations of affection for Georgia and willingness to collaborate in restoring Georgian rule over the whole territory of Abkhazia and rapid repatriation of all IDPs to their homes. Abkhazia will not even insist on receiving autonomous republic status if Georgia prefers a unitary state structure to a federalist one, and accepts rights of cultural autonomy.

2006

## **NEGATIVE IDEAL SCENARIO FROM THE GEORGIAN PERSPECTIVE**

The Abkhaz unambiguously state they will pursue independence or incorporation into the Russian Federation at all costs, continue publicly to express their intolerance towards Georgians, and strengthen their links with Russian nationalists and military. Russia ensures sustainability of the internationally still-unrecognized Abkhazian state. The Abkhazian authorities form sustainable alliances with the ethnically related North Caucasus nations, which express their solidarity with and provide armed support for the Abkhazian cause. Ignoring the UN/OSCE etc. decisions and resolutions, the Abkhaz expatriate all remaining or returned ethnic Georgians from Abkhazia, and close and land-mine the border with the help of Russian “peacekeeping” forces. Abkhazia remains an uncontrolled territory active in trafficking, illegal trade, and smuggling of weapons and drugs. Maintaining trade links with Russia and Turkey<sup>1</sup> and developing ties with international terrorist groups allow them to prolong indefinitely their de facto independence, unless their supporters in the Russian State Duma succeed in incorporating Abkhazia in the Russian Federation. Abkhazia supports South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh in maintaining their de facto independence, and supports nationalist anti-Georgian movements in ethnic minority settlements in Georgia. Georgian state power degenerates, and the international community – despite official warnings and statements – reacts passively, allowing the separation to be legitimized in the long run.

## **POSITIVE RATIONAL SCENARIO FROM THE GEORGIAN PERSPECTIVE**

The Abkhaz (political leadership on behalf of the nation, or comparably considerable/influential groups) declare they want to restore friendly relations with Georgian society, and willingly accept

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<sup>1</sup> Turkey has adhered to the territorial integrity of Georgia, yet private Turkish companies have been actively involved in barter trade with Abkhazia via the Black Sea ports.

their entry in the Georgian federal state. They realize that in their best national interest they should oppose Russian political domination, and never more be a tool of Russian or any other great-power politics. Being ethnically different from Georgians, they agree they have historically and culturally been related to the Georgian nation, that they respect centuries-long common traditions and ties with Georgians, and are committed to restoration together with Georgians of what was ruined by the conflict and war. Being committed to maintaining their autonomy on federalist principles within the Georgian state, the Abkhaz nevertheless sign an agreement according to which they will not seek full independence unless provoked by aggressive nationalist policies of Georgian authorities, in which case the Abkhaz will appeal to international law for protection. The international community achieves the replacement of Russia as an intermediary to settle the Georgian-Abkhaz dispute with appropriate international structures.

2006

### **NEGATIVE RATIONAL SCENARIO FROM THE GEORGIAN PERSPECTIVE**

The Abkhaz negotiate with, yet decline all proposed solutions from, Georgians, insist on their de facto achieved and self-proclaimed independence, and become more sustainable by strengthening ties with Russian communists/nationalists, pro-Abkhaz North Caucasian nations, and their diasporas in Turkey and other countries. Finding a solution for the IDP repatriation problem and the Abkhazia conflict is postponed indefinitely. The Georgian repatriate-populated Gali region of Abkhazia, the only area where joint supervision (in a stronger case, de facto jurisdiction) of Georgian authorities might be accepted, turns into a high-risk zone. Finally, the Georgian authorities have to sign the only version of a negotiable agreement acceptable to the Abkhaz, whereby Abkhazia and Georgia, as two equal subjects of international law, sign a treaty by which they form a confederative state on a symmetrical basis which delegates certain prerogatives (like foreign diplomatic relations, foreign trade, border control, communications, etc.) to the

federal structures and authorities. Abkhaz maintain their right of secession and formation of an independent state.

### **POSITIVE IDEAL SCENARIO FROM THE ABKHAZIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Georgians realize they should not even attempt to offer any status for Abkhazia, but should accept whatever kind of statehood the Abkhaz people choose to build for themselves, and whoever they would want to affiliate with politically. Georgians acknowledge they have acted as aggressors towards Abkhazia and have executed forceful assimilation policies against the Abkhaz nation in the past, as a result of which the Abkhaz became a minority in their homeland. Georgians express their acceptance of whatever decision is arrived at by the Abkhaz, and, if the Abkhaz decision is to develop a common confederate state with Georgians, will negotiate (soft bargaining only) the principles of peaceful coexistence. If the Abkhaz refuse to have any political relationship with Georgia, the two parties willingly sign an agreement of neutrality and non-interference in each other's affairs. Georgia undertakes an obligation not to use military force, or third parties' or international influence, to press Abkhazia into a political or economic alliance, and not to raise the issue of repatriation of the refugees of the 1992-1993 Georgian-Abkhaz war to Abkhazia.

### **NEGATIVE IDEAL SCENARIO FROM THE ABKHAZIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Georgia manages, either by military force or by Western-aided economic and political pressure, to crush the Abkhazian statehood, restore Georgian jurisdiction over the whole Abkhazia territory, and forcibly settle masses of refugees (or would-be refugees) in Abkhazia, giving them a free hand in occupying Abkhaz homes whenever claimed by the repatriates and allowing acts of vengeance. Abkhazia is overwhelmed by criminal activities and the whole subregion plunges into turmoil. Abkhazia is declared (and acknowledged by

UN and other international structures as) another province of Georgia and is again subject to forcible assimilation, extending to the full extermination or dissolution of the Abkhaz nation.

### **POSITIVE RATIONAL SCENARIO FROM THE ABKHAZIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Despite the political and economic pressure, Abkhazia manages to achieve internal stability and sustainability, develop trade and barter exchange with neighbouring countries like Turkey or Russia (especially North Caucasus autonomies), and strengthen its position in negotiations on the future status of Abkhazia. Seeing that Abkhazia is able to sustain itself at least for another decade, Georgia agrees to sign the federative union treaty with the Abkhazia Republic, based on which they form a confederation or an asymmetrical federation wherein the Abkhaz preserve all the rights that ensure their sovereignty, security, and autonomous development. Abkhazia succeeds in including a secession right in the treaty. Georgian authorities keep to the prerogatives delegated to them by the union treaty. Limited groups of Georgian refugees return to places prescribed by the Abkhaz authorities where they cannot destabilize the local situation.

### **NEGATIVE RATIONAL SCENARIO FROM THE ABKHAZIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Georgia manages to activate the CIS governments and the international community to exercise political pressure and strengthen the blockade of Abkhazia, escalates guerilla war, and succeeds in aggravating economic, social, and political conditions in Abkhazia to the extent that the internal situation is seriously destabilized. Crime and corruption further undermine Abkhaz society. Negotiations with the Georgian leadership are at a stalemate because Georgia does not want to negotiate an equal partnership agreement on forming a confederal/federal state, and insists on refugee return to the entire territory of Abkhazia. In this case Abkhazia is forced



to seek incorporation in the Russian Federation or pursue de facto independence through an alliance with North-Caucasian-friendly and ethnically related nations (e.g. in the proposed United North Caucasus republic).

### **REALISTIC OUTCOMES**

Needless to say, the rational scenarios have a considerably higher probability of materializing, although it is hard to make a decisive choice between them at the moment. The “magic formula” for both avoiding and overcoming inter-ethnic disputes, especially of a titular ethnic group with minorities, is making life in the country attractive, if not for economic prosperity, than for safety, tolerance, and openness, thus creating stimuli for minorities to stay rather than to secede. Georgia is gradually turning into a stable country. In spite of a severe energy and production crisis caused by the collapse of the Soviet internal market, the country has managed not only to survive but to build up its capacity to play a significant role in regional and international relations.

### **THE PERCEPTION OF SPOILING AND SPOILERS AMONGST THE PARTIES TO CONFLICT**

The perception of spoiling in this case is formed according to the ideas of a just approach to the issue and its just solution. Spoiling is seen wherever one side acts contrary to the other side’s perceived goal of the peace process.

### **THE ABKHAZ**

The spoilers are Georgian state authorities, as they act contrary to their expressed commitments and signed agreements; they undermine and violate bilateral and multilateral agreements, sponsor guerillas, and impose sanctions and blockades. Loyalty is expressed by the Abkhaz party both to the Russian mediation and to IOs, INGOs, and IGOs. Cautious tolerance is expressed to the selected

Georgian NGOs/CSOs involved in a very limited dialogue process (approved by the de facto Abkhaz authorities).

### **THE GEORGIANS**

The spoilers are Russian mediators and the official structures involved in the negotiation process: they act contrary to their expressed commitments and signed agreements, and are siding with the Abkhaz and prevent rapprochement. The Abkhaz de facto authorities are not spoilers: they just adhere to what they strive for. Tolerant scepticism is expressed towards IOs and INGOs, although loyalty is expressed towards Western GOs and IGOs.

2006

### **THE RUSSIANS**

The spoilers are Georgian state authorities, as they act contrary to their expressed commitments and signed agreements; they undermine and violate bilateral and multilateral agreements, sponsor guerillas, and impose sanctions and blockades. Spoilers are also Western IGOs which support the Georgian side.

### **DISCUSSION**

The interest represented by the Abkhazia case lies in that it differs from most studied cases of conflict and post-conflict situations. In the first place, there are no spoilers unambiguously recognized by both sides, but there are actors unilaterally identified as spoilers by one party to conflict, or by a third party. In Rwanda, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa, Bosnia, and many other cases the dynamics of the process involved a change of role/interest/resourcefulness of the actors immediately engaged in peace negotiations and a fulfilment of the agreement. Efforts of the international community led to signing peace agreements in all these countries after a period of intensive post-civil-war negotiations, followed in some cases by a renewal of civil war or genocide perpetrated by the former parties to the peace process or even signatories of the peace agreement. In the South Caucasus cases it has never

come to the stage of elaborating or signing a peace agreement, but only to provisional and interim agreements on a cease-fire, and the creation of commissions of joint control on a cease-fire.

Azerbaijan and Georgia have been careful about taking any decisions that might lead to or be interpreted as a legitimization of the de facto authorities of the seceded territories; at the same time, it became clear that boycotting and the “no negotiation” strategy was not a managing tool. Georgia’s approach in Abkhazia has been less rigid than Azerbaijan’s in Nagorno-Karabakh, but it did not bring the parties’ positions closer.

The insufficient impact of the efforts of international organizations has been obvious to all (proven by the non-existence of substantial stimuli for the parties involved to hurry after “the departing train”). Yet there has been little analysis specifically on the causes of this inefficiency, as this might reveal the degree of rigidity in international peacekeeping operations and an awkward circumstance that freezing the conflict may comply with the bureaucratic needs of huge intergovernmental structures. It was much easier to blame the situation on the marginalities of post-Soviet space and the inability of the parties to negotiate.

A view has emerged in the outside world about seceded formations that may be described as the “Tom and Jerry effect”:<sup>1</sup> the smaller are perceived as weaker and needing protection from their larger adversaries, sympathies are rearranged accordingly, and efforts to defreeze<sup>2</sup> the conflict are therefore rejected and even condemned as jeopardizing stability in conflict zones. As a result, the secessionists and their supporters manage to mobilize resources that balance the powers, which, in turn, prolongs the status quo but at the same time leads to manipulation of on-site situations and eventually to “sterilization” of the peace process.<sup>3</sup> The secessionists

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<sup>1</sup> Khutsishvili, George. 2004. “The “Tom and Jerry Effect” in the picture of ethno-political conflict”, “The 24 Hours”, 21 July.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Khutsishvili, George, “What freezes and what unfreezes conflicts?”, available at <http://sef-bonn.org/events/2000/kaukasus/khutsishvili.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Khutsishvili, note 11 above.

therefore grow in their own vision as victorious small nations successfully establishing themselves against larger “imperial” powers.

All the UN Security Council resolutions and positions of member states unambiguously adhere to the territorial integrity of Georgia and Azerbaijan, meaning that no legitimization may be accepted for the self-proclaimed republics of Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia without prior consent of the respective South Caucasus states. Most cases of ethnic separatism have remarkably ended in the international community finally legitimizing the secession and sponsoring the creation of new independent states.

The “fog of the peace process” in the Abkhazia case may be illustrated by the Russian Federation’s acceptance (rather than assignation) by the international community as the broker of the peace agreement in a conflict zone where it does not act as a neutral party. An internationally sponsored mediator and custodian of the peace process has appeared to be acting as a spoiler. In their turn, Georgia and Azerbaijan have looked at international mediation as a tool to exert pressure on the secessionists, while the radical groups in their societies have pressured their governments not to negotiate at all, as this, in their view, in itself already means legitimization of secessionist authorities. An ideal process according to such groups would take place if the international organizations “mediated” the imposition of ultimata on secessionists while host governments consistently kept a non-negotiating stance. The Abkhazia case also shows another peculiarity. The radical group of Georgian IDP leaders from the “Abkhazia government-in-exile” – which was obviously in opposition to the peacebuilding process in the 1990s — were never openly criticized by the international custodians of the peace process, although informally the reaction to this group has been extremely negative. UN and OSCE missions in Georgia have always stressed that their policy is to cooperate with that group, as it had been supported and backed by the Georgian state authorities.<sup>1</sup>

2006

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<sup>1</sup> The Abkhazia government-in-exile was created after the civil war in Abkhazia and its secession from Georgia, as an alternative to and in the same format as the Sovi-

The peace process in the Abkhazia case may succeed only if “the fog is cleared”: clear definitions lead to the abandonment of the double standards and ambiguous policies of some of the “peace custodians”, the parties to conflict and subjects of peace process are clearly defined, and international mediation is done via “outsider-neutral”<sup>1</sup> parties and is combined with a substantial effort to exert pressure on the parties violating the internationally recognized rules and norms of the peace process.

### **DEFREEZING AS SPOILING? THE CASE OF SOUTH OSSETIA INTERVENTION**

The first serious attempt in the whole post-war period to change the balance of forces in a conflict zone was made in summer 2004 by the Georgian authorities. After the “Rose Revolution” (November 2003), President Mikheil Saakashvili at his inauguration in January 2004 publicly promised the Georgian people “Georgia will be whole again”. That meant he would restore the territorial integrity of the country within the period of his presidency – of course by non-violent means. After the second successful milestone of the Georgian revolution – ousting a Moscow-backed rebellious Ajara provincial leader, Aslan Abashidze, in early May 2004 – the Georgian government started to prepare the third stage: they developed a strategy for defreezing the Abkhazia and South Ossetia post-conflict process. Efforts were first made with regard to South Ossetia, combining “carrots” (humanitarian assistance, free medical aid to Osset and Georgian villagers, putting the former on the Georgian state payroll

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et-style Abkhazia Supreme Council that had led the seceded autonomy, accompanied by all the ministries and departments which existed prior to the armed conflict. Contrary to the constitution, 10 seats were guaranteed for this group in the Georgian parliament until November 2003. Georgian revolution has put an end to this practice. It would be fair to mention that the government-in-exile has become more constructive after its chairman, Tamaz Nadareishvili, was voted down in February 2004.

<sup>1</sup> Lederach, John Paul. 1995. *Preparing for Peace. Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. New York: Syracuse University Press; Lederach, John Paul. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: US Institute for Peace Press.

for pensions, etc.) and “sticks” (dissolution of the Ergneti market at the entrance to the South Osset capital Tskhinvali, where ethnic Georgian and Ossets traded together, illegal goods were smuggled, and criminal money was laundered; increasing of the number of Georgian armed block-posts, especially in the Georgian-populated villages, etc.). Georgian intervention was a risky experiment intended to bring the “frozen” system out of equilibrium to make it more manageable. It seems that the Georgian government expected understanding of, if not full support for, these actions from the Russian authorities, especially in view of the visible thaw in Georgian-Russian relations earlier in spring 2004. But the result was exactly the opposite: the Russian mass media and State Duma denounced Saakashvili’s policy as spoiling and attempted to launch a new stage of the “Rose Revolution” in South Ossetia. The Western reaction has been spectacularly different.

The Russian view of this process has focused on concrete cases of violation of the agreements, as well as unilateral action on the Georgian side, which they assessed as risky and irresponsible. The Georgian view of the same process focused on the generally biased attitude of the Russian peacekeepers in the conflict zone and the State Duma’s expressed statements of support for the secessionists.

In the Russian perspective, no actions of the Georgian authorities in the conflict zone were legitimate unless approved in advance by the four-sided commission (dominated at that time by the Russian-appointed commander of peacekeeping forces who never hid his anti-Georgian approach<sup>1</sup>). According to the Russian authorities’ view, the Georgians attempted in summer 2004 to establish their military control in the conflict zone and de facto Georgian jurisdiction in South Ossetia by treating both Osset and Georgian populations according to Georgian law (even by paying pensions), while the entire population of South Ossetia is in fact subordinate to the

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<sup>1</sup> Georgian TV channels, especially the leading Rustavi 2, gave in summer 2004 much evidence of this, in the form of live broadcasts and interviews with the head of the Russian peacekeepers, General Nabdzorov, on his biased attitudes towards Georgians.

constitution and legislature of the South Ossetia Republic (Russian official documents avoid calling it “self-proclaimed”, or otherwise stressing the lack of legitimacy of that entity). An interim solution to the aggravated situation in the conflict zone, in the Russian view, may be achieved only through the full submission of the Georgian authorities to the de facto distribution of powers in place for the entire post-war period.

According to the Georgian perspective, the Russian approach has been illegitimately imposing on the Georgian side the attitude that the South Ossetia Republic is a separate state, and was contrary to Russia’s international obligations and official declarations of the Russian leadership. If it is internationally acknowledged that South Ossetia is part of Georgia, then why should Georgian humanitarian initiatives and actions require special permission for implementation in the conflict zone? The Georgian perspective presupposed also the right of movement for Georgian law enforcement agencies in South Ossetia, which had never been requested in previous years. For many years the Georgians had not interfered in the practically unlimited domain of the peacekeeping operation zone for the sake of maintaining the fragile stability. In return, Georgian villagers in South Ossetia were kept by the local de facto authorities in relatively safe conditions. The Osset secessionist government led by then President Ludwig Chibirov collaborated with the Georgian authorities on practical matters in a balanced manner, and movement between the conflict zone and mainland Georgia had been simplified. The election of Eduard Kokoity as president of South Ossetia in 2002 indicated a more intrusive approach by Russia to the seceded regions of Georgia: Russian passports were openly distributed among the population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, control of local mass media and NGOs hardened, and movement to/from Tbilisi was complicated. Kokoity’s government repeatedly tried to push towards the incorporation of South Ossetia in the Russian Federation – an initiative unacceptable in international law but always positively reacted to and encouraged by the Russian State Duma, which had repeatedly threatened to impose sanctions on Georgia

for the protection of Russian citizens<sup>1</sup> in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. According to Georgia's view, it is legitimate to defend the rights (at least) of the Georgian population of South Ossetia, who have never acknowledged themselves as citizens of another country.

According to the Western perspective represented by European and US media sources, academic writings, and analytical papers (official documents are much more reserved), Russia is not a neutral party, as it has been siding with one – and remarkably, a secessionist – party in all post-Soviet conflicts and cannot play the role of impartial mediator in the internal conflicts of Georgia. If it is true that defreezing contains certain threats to stability and peace (a cease-fire in this case), then freezing is no more credible and praiseworthy than defreezing, and freezing the conflicts is what the “custodians to peace” have been contributing to in all the post-war years of the so-called peace process in Georgia. Russia's role has been spectacular in this regard, although it did not ideologically contradict the roles and mandates of the international structures on site.

## CONCLUSIONS

Logically speaking, “spoiling” is a term applicable to actual, not virtual or simulated, peace processes; spoiling can take place where there is something to spoil, i.e. a valid peace process. The peace process in Georgia has balanced for years on the brink of disappearing. Therefore one needs a certain amount of caution and clarity when speaking of the role of spoiling in Georgia. The parties' mutual perception includes a specific vision and understanding of spoiling. The specificity of the peace process in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts corresponds to the specificity of spoilers and spoiling in these cases. In order to identify a spoiling party and the nature of spoiling in a given case, it is important to be as far removed as possible from the impact of subjectivity present in the

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<sup>1</sup> Russia has double citizenship. Any other country's citizen may obtain Russian ID and will be considered in such a case to be a Russian citizen. Multiplying citizens in other countries is another tool to exert pressure on those countries.



parties' vision of the roots, causes, and resolution of the conflict. Specifically, in the Georgian conflicts one can observe the influence of an external spoiler.

In the Abkhazia and South Ossetia cases Russia has displayed partiality and double standards: officially declaring neutrality and adherence to internationally recognized principles, and actually siding with a secessionist party. Russian mediation has contributed to the frozen state of negotiations and deepened the gap between the parties to conflict, which is incompatible with the role of a custodian of the peace process. A custodian of the peace process acting as insider-partial is actually a party to conflict, and loses legitimacy as an objective mediator.

A lack of communication between the conflicting parties, persisting negative stereotypes, and deadlocked negotiations diminish the chances of a negotiated peace agreement and increase the probability of renewal of armed clashes. Therefore attempts at humanitarian intervention and other non-violent forms of "defrosting" cannot be rejected as such. The general attitude of the European interparliamentary, interstate, and human rights structures prior to and after the Georgia developments in summer 2004 has been limited to appeals to stay within the confines of bilateral actions and refrain from any attempts at "defrosting". A complicated conflict scene and casualties in South Ossetia were later referred to as evidence of the futility and danger of any attempt to interfere in the distribution of forces in a conflict zone and the structure of frozen conflict. This should not mean, however, that "freezing" is a better situation than "defreezing", especially if international mediation efforts have been unsuccessful for over a decade and at least one custodian to the peace process has really done nothing towards the reconciliation of the parties.

# Commemorating the Immortal Teaching



George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Chairman, International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, The Messenger, Georgia's English Language Daily, February 19, 2007.

# 2007

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Chairman, International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, The Messenger, Georgia's English Language Daily, February 19, 2007.

Satyagraha means pressing for political reform through non-violent resistance. The teachings of satyagraha and ahimsa (non-violence) as tools of political struggle belong to the great Mahatma Gandhi. Their centenary was commemorated in their respective countries. Yet the real world develops in a contradictory and often unpredictable ways, extraneous the imagination of gurus of virtual reality.

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## COMMEMORATING THE IMMORTAL TEACHING

Satyagraha means pressing for political reform through non-violent resistance. The teachings of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa* (non-violence) as tools of political struggle belong to the great Mahatma Gandhi. Their centenary was commemorated on January 29-30 in a world-wide forum initiated by Sonia Gandhi, President of the Indian National Congress. The forum in New Delhi was addressed by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and attended by such luminaries as Nobel Prize laureates Lech Walesa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Muhammad Yunus, as well as former and current heads of state and famous leaders. All spoke passionately about Gandhi's immortal heritage and challenges to the modern world's stability and peace, Nelson Mandela addressed the forum from Johannesburg. Remarkably, none of the celebrities attracted the attention of the cameramen so-much as Rahul Gandhi (Sonia and Rajiv's son), a growing young Indian politician.

Dr. Gene Sharp of America's Albert Einstein Institute, author of a famous book on the technology of velvet revolutions, spoke at

the forum about Mahatma Gandhi as his personal inspiration. The American expert also launched a new computer strategy game “A Force More Powerful”, which draws on the experience of Serbia’s Otpor youth group, Georgia’s Kmara, and Ukraine’s Pora, which all pioneered the non-violent revolutions in their respective countries. Yet the real world develops in a contradictory and often unpredictable ways, outrunning the imagination of gurus of virtual reality.

India, an ancient civilization and a modern nuclear power, is gaining momentum, not only bridging the gap with China in its population growth rate, but also boosting its economy, business and defence capacities. Russian President Vladimir Putin, who signed a large-scale military cooperation agreement with his Indian counterparts, left Delhi the day before the forum started, leaving a representative delegation to participate in the conference. Russia definitely intends to compete with the West for influence in India.

Among all the different, and often large, country delegations, I was the sole representative of Georgia, a country that just recently proved once again to the whole world the viability of Gandhi’s teaching. Colour revolutions in the post-Soviet space are the next stage of *satyagraha* in action; At the same time, I could not help thinking about disbelief that still reigns in people’s minds about non-violent pressure for peaceful solutions to conflicts, the way that has no alternative. One has to believe in order to act.

7 April 2007

George Khutsishvili

People feel uneasy in Georgia nowadays. Something strange and artificial is in the air. A proposed manner of the “right” behavior is “live like we are at war”. As if somebody is preparing us for something that is not going to be digested easily and goes meticulously through moves – kind of pre-operation training – to make public digestion of the upcoming events smoother. Thinking by imperatives, demanding loyalty and demonstration of patriotism from citizens, legalizing eavesdropping, introducing a total defense doctrine (as if somebody is going to attack the country right away) make, on the whole, the impression that all the efforts are made to facilitate a major breakthrough in a direction vital for the nation – everyone’s bells ring immediately about territorial integrity – and also to justify the lack of legitimacy in many of the government’s actions.

Is it really because something very painful is going to happen in Abkhazia or on Russian border, and the nation should be mobilized to a maximum extent, or because we are heading for fulfillment of a maximalist agenda to have a one-party parliament and Soviet-style legal system and the expected public discontent should be neutralized?

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICGN), Tbilisi, Georgia, Unpublished Manuscript, 7<sup>th</sup> of April, 2007.

David vs. Goliath: we are the smartest guys in the world, no less; we are small, we look weak, but look how bold we are and how we leave bruises on who is everybody’s idea of a monster. We have become the world’s front page news again! It is true that Georgians feel worse and worse in Russia, and

## PEOPLE FEEL UNEASY

People feel uneasy in Georgia nowadays. Something strange and artificial is in the air. A proposed manner of the “right” behavior is “live like we are at war”. As if somebody is preparing us for something that is not going to be digested easily and goes meticulously through moves – kind of pre-operation training – to make public digestion of the upcoming events smoother. Thinking by imperatives, demanding loyalty and demonstration of patriotism from citizens, legalizing eavesdropping, introducing a total defense doctrine (as if somebody is going to attack the country right away) make, on the whole, the impression that all the efforts are made to facilitate a major breakthrough in a direction vital for the nation – everyone’s bells ring immediately about territorial integrity – and also to justify the lack of legitimacy in many of the government’s actions.

Is it really because something very painful is going to happen in Abkhazia or on Russian border, and the nation should be mobilized to a maximum extent, or because we are heading for fulfillment of a maximalist agenda to have a one-party parliament and Soviet-style legal system and the expected public discontent should be neutral-

ized by permanent awareness in people of an external threat – a clear and present danger? One way to make people digest what they otherwise would protest to would be justifiable conditions for martial law in peaceful time.

David vs Goliath: we are the smartest guys in the world, no less: we are small, we look weak, but look how bold we are and how we leave bruises on who is everybody's idea of a monster. We have become the world's front page news again! It is true that Georgians feel worse and worse in Russia.

### **WESTERN ORIENTATION COMBINED WITH THE SOVIET METHODOLOGY OF POWER**

What may just be a growth sickness and should be tolerated if we want to grow up, e.g. growing alienation of armed structures that earlier were communicated easily by ralliers in the streets and everybody knew would be reluctant to shoot at people.

Chechen Wars, as well as "Silk Road and Great Game: International Policy and Regional Development between Caucasus and Central Asia" and "Stability and Co-operation: Issues of International Political Order in the Caucasus Region".

Prof. Dr. George Khutsishvili, Georgia. Prof. Khutsishvili is the founder (1994) and director of the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN) in Tbilisi. He is a renowned political and conflict resolution expert. Dr. Khutsishvili also teaches international conflict analysis at the University of Georgia, and is editor-in-chief of the new Georgian magazine "Diplomatic Messenger". He is also co-author of numerous books and articles. He has visited and worked in many conflict zones and hot spots. Human rights education and society development are important dimensions of his work.

Dr. Amir Maleki, Iran. Dr. Maleki is a senior research fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies, RAND Corporation, USA; Editor in Chief of *Journal of Islamic Revolution Studies*, Iran. Previously Dr. Maleki was Advisor to Iran's Foreign Minister.

SPECTRUM  
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES:  
2007

# 2007

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, SPECTRUM - Center for Strategic Analysis, Regional Security Issues: 2007.

## UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS IN GEORGIA: DEADLOCKS, OXYMORONS AND STRATEGIES

There is a general consensus in Georgian society that the European and Euro-Atlantic integration has no alternative and is essential for securing a safe and decent future of the country in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment. However, it looks like public expectations for possible timeframes of getting Membership Accession Plan (MAP), and moreover, of NATO membership are over-optimistic. After November 2007 the internal political crisis has become particularly obvious. There is an ongoing active discussion in Georgia, as well as in Georgia-related international circles, on how Georgia's NATO membership could be reconciled with unresolved conflicts on its territory, especially regarding Abkhazia, where the return of almost 250,000 IDPs and the progress in conflict resolution should take considerable time in all cases. How could Georgia's NATO membership affect the situation in conflict zones: would it play a stabilizing or destabilizing role? Would it foster the forces inside the South-Ossetian and Abkhazian societies striving for

integration in Russia, or create a pro-Western movement seeking benefits of Euro-integration?<sup>1</sup>

Encouragement and active support for Georgia's aspirations from Euro-Atlantic structures and the U.S. administration are obvious. Yet to the directly poised question "Is it realistic to expect inclusion in NATO of a country with unresolved internal conflicts?" usually the following is answered: "Hmm, well, generally there are no prohibitions for that in the NATO Charter, so we cannot exclude that". There is also a precedent that is often referred to: the Republic of Cyprus, that was made an EU member in 2004, skipping the NATO stage, compulsory for Eastern-European candidates, along with its unresolved conflict, unaccepted Kofi Annan plan of integration, and the northern part, living by its own rules.

A simple solution to the Georgian dilemma is that international community realistically assesses the time before Georgia's NATO membership as comparable with the time the country may need to achieve real progress in resolution of both conflicts (which should not prevent Georgia from getting and fulfilling MAP anytime in the meanwhile), and this may turn to be a considerable period. Progress in the Euro-Atlantic integration will continue to be supported, but the actual NATO membership for Georgia is not a matter of next few years. Before that time comes, Georgia is expected to demonstrate success in implementing economic and legal reforms, modernizing the army, building democratic institutions and law-based state. Progress should be seen in implementation of the five-year EU Action Plan adopted in 2006, developing cooperation with ENP countries, and, the last but not least, normalization of Georgia's relations with Russia.

Although the Russian Embassy in Tbilisi resumed its work after the fall 2006 crisis, there is practically no air or ground transporta-

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<sup>1</sup> Khutsishvili, George. Post-Revolutionary Georgia: Frozen Conflicts and Prospects of Euro-Integration. In: V. Zhurkin and A. Yazkova (eds.), *South-Eastern Europe and Russia: Mediterranean-Black Sea Region Problems (Materials of International Conference, November 18-19, 2004)*. Reports of the Institute of Europe of RAS, N°162, Magazine "Vestnik Analitiki", Moscow, 2005, OGNi TD, pp. 122-125.

tion, airmail exchanged or visas issued between the two countries. Complicated relations with Russia remain a stumbling block for a number of important issues, such as peaceful resolution of Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts, where Russia has remained the main custodian of peace on behalf of the Countries – Friends of the UN Secretary General on Georgia in all post-war years. At the root of aggravated relations lies the strong perception in Georgia, that since the inception of conflicts Russia was responsible for the instigation of ethnic tensions that led to the impaired territorial integrity of the country.

2007

### **IN SEARCH OF HYPER-LINKS TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL PROJECTS OF GEORGIANS, ABKHAZIANS, WITH RUSSIANS IN BETWEEN...**

It is seldom possible to blame just one side for ethno-political conflicts, so in the Georgian case the responsibility also rests with all parties involved, and ultra-nationalism risen in the process of decline of the Soviet Union contributed to growing frictions in Georgian society. To the present day, different pictures exist in Georgian society about what happened and why. What happened in 1992-93 is generally seen in Georgia as an internal civil clash, provoked from outside, and the post-war situation – as a case of divided society (ousted ethnic Georgian population outside Abkhazia, on the one hand, and the Abkhazian and other ethnic groups remaining in Abkhazia, on the other), while in these secessionist Abkhazia it is seen as national liberation, as a result of the war, and subsequent independent state building, confirmed by the 1998 referendum (where Georgian IDPs – majority of Abkhazia's pre-war population – did not participate). Russia has claimed to be an outsider-neutral at all times; yet in the wake of the conflicts, as well as in all post-conflict years (if we mean by conflict proper its high-intensity phase) Russia kept a biased position, supporting separatism. Distribution of its national passports among Abkhazian and South-Ossetian populations at first was explained by Russia as a humanitarian action to facilitate traveling abroad and getting Russian pensions. Later all



people, having Russian passports, were declared Russian citizens subject to protection by Russian law, which has become a tool of manipulation and pressure on Georgia. The Russian ruble is the official currency in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. All that had been done unilaterally, without Georgia's consent. Considering the fact that Russia officially shares the unanimous position of international community that these are internal conflicts of Georgia, it is blamed by Georgia for pursuing double standards and interfering in internal affairs of the country.

In view of the recurrent crises and currently existing tension, the Russian role in maintaining status quo of the "frozen conflicts" is negatively assessed in Georgia. However, Georgia's concerns are usually "understood" but seldom officially shared in the documents of international organizations. All UN Security Council resolutions, including the latest – 1716 (2006), 1752 and 1781 (2007), assess the role of the CIS (actually Russian) peace-keeping forces, stationed in the zones of conflict, as constructive and positive, meaning that without them the parties might resume hostilities. The internationally agreed negotiation formats for both conflicts have been Russian-controlled and dominated. Ceasefire has been preserved, but the peace process is frozen. Under such circumstances, the only efficient way to register the required "positive dynamics" with regard to conflicts might come as a result of changes in the negotiation format and selection of custodians: at this stage, it would be essential to make the EU part of the negotiation format with the mandate at least matching that of Russia.<sup>1</sup>

There are strongly negative attitudes in Russia towards the NATO expansion to the East, which is perceived there as a direct threat both to international stability and to national security of the Russian Federation. Georgia's "intensive dialogue" with NATO and strategic partnership with the U.S. further deepen Russia's alienation

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<sup>1</sup> Khutsishvili, George. The Abkhazia and South Ossetia Cases: Spoilers in the Nearly Collapsed Peace Process. In: Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond, eds., *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution*, Tokyo: UNU Press, 2006.

from Georgia. At the same time, Abkhazians who clearly see the advantages of their unique climatic and recreational zone would appreciate seeking opportunities for Euro-integration, yet without alienating Russia or giving in to Georgia's conditions, of course. In such a situation, the recent decision that Sochi will be home for the 2014 Winter Olympics has immediately triggered vivid discussions in both societies on how this might affect the stumbled conflict resolution process.

Contrary to the expected, President M. Saakashvili supported Sochi's candidacy prior to the voting in Guatemala, and confirmed his positive attitude immediately thereafter, stressing that this would help to keep the process in peaceful and civilized frames and at the same time open new opportunities for cooperation. Positive and negative scenarios of the consequences of the Guatemala decision for the solution of the Abkhazian conflict are being considered in Georgian society, with (so far) prevailing view that this will make the whole process more dependent on Russia and less manageable from the Georgian side.

There are strong expectations in the unrecognized entities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with regard to Kosovo's expected independence status. Russian officials frequently note that Kosovo presents a precedent that will inevitably be used to facilitate Russia's greater support and institutionalization of bilateral relations, to the extent of recognition of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian republics, while international community rejects such an immediate link between the two cases. Georgian officials, in their turn, consider such an endeavor as a belligerent act from Russia's side.

New opportunities for restarting Georgian-Abkhazian negotiations may appear as Abkhaz rethink their assessments of Russia as an almighty lord-protector of their (unrecognized) independent statehood. Russia was unable to prevent Georgia and NATO from moving toward each other, and when Georgia fulfills MAP and stands closer to the membership, Abkhazia may get stuck in a kind of an insecure buffer zone at the NATO-RF border with all unpleasant consequences, disastrous for its plans for developing tourist

and resort businesses. Abkhazia needs to meet that stage with a clear orientation scheme and participation prospects, for which it needs to reach agreements on common formats' and priorities of Euro-integration process with Georgia.<sup>1</sup>

Otherwise, scenarios for possible progress in Georgian-Abkhazian relations remain unclear. Public diplomacy process actively developed by NGOs in both sides in second half of the 1990s faded out, as there was little political will to support and encourage it. Declared positions of the parties grew and still remain irreconcilable, and only scarce occasional contacts between small groups of civil society representatives happen from time to time. Abkhazians usually agree to meet with individual Georgians at forums having Caucasian or international format.

In case if systematic contacts between representatives of the parties to conflict restart, track-two efforts are to play a serious role in the confidence building and reconciliation processes<sup>2</sup>.

### **SOUTH OSSETIA: CONFLICT RESOLUTION WITHOUT NEGOTIATION?**

Western strategic partners of Georgia encourage and urge for direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict in order to achieve progress in negotiations. Formally complying to that, the new Georgian leadership, who came to power after the "Rose Revolution" in November 2003, prefers to seek the unexplored ways to change the balance of forces and ensure new developments both in Abkhazia and South Ossetia without directly communicating with the adversary. In Abkhazia the mountainous Upper Kodori Gorge (never controlled by secessionists) has been made home for the "Abkhazia Legitimate Government in Exile" earlier stationed in Tbilisi. The Upper Kodori Gorge had been renamed by Tbilisi to Upper Abkhazia

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<sup>1</sup> Abkhazia: Ways Forward. International Crisis Group. Europe Report N°179, January 18, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Please also refer to the studies done by Dr. Paula Garb's group (UCI), Berghof Centre in Berlin, et al.

to stress that now diarchy exists and the status quo no more holds in the conflict zone. However, the project has re-stagnated again at that stage. In a more advanced and intricate form we can see this strategy being implemented towards South Ossetia in the form of so-called "Sanakoev project".

It happened so that the borders of so-called Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone were designated as coinciding with the administrative borders of pre-conflict South Osset Autonomous Oblast (abolished by the Georgian Parliament in December 1990). Contrary to Abkhazia, where Enguri River turned into a natural dividing line between the communities, there were Georgian and Ossetian populated villages intermingled and there have always been territories within the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone never fully controlled by the secessionist government in Tskhinvali. So implementation of the "Sanakoev project" proved in earlier stages feasible for the Georgian authorities in that territory. Three stages may be distinguished in that project implementation.

**Stage One (completed):** Participation of the Georgia-approved candidates in the presidential elections declared by the Tskhinvali de facto regime looked at that time as a political adventurism and legitimization of the de facto regime. Dmitry Sanakoev, former Prime Minister of the de facto government, wins the alternative elections in the parts of South Ossetia mostly populated by ethnic Georgians, and establishes an administrative centre in the town of Kurta. His victory is not acknowledged by Tskhinvali, but he forms the government, calls himself elected president of the Republic of South Ossetia, and declares his course towards reunification with Georgia. Tbilisi in its turn acknowledges him as President of South Ossetia, establishes political and economic ties with the Sanakoev administration and soon... appoints him head of the newly established Provisional Administrative Unit on the territories he controls. Large-scale construction programs developing on the Sanakoev side of conflict zone should demonstrate to the Tskhinvali community the advantages and support the Sanakoev administration enjoys from the Georgian government. De facto status of the territories, con-

trolled by separatists, remains the same, but diarchy is created in the conflict zone, its borders are changed, and the status quo is formally broken up.

**Stage Two (ongoing):** Tbilisi continues to refuse talking to V. Kokoity (de facto president of the unrecognized South Ossetia Republic) and promotes Sanakoev as the alternative and preferred representative of the “other side” in conflict. International community is offered to recognize Sanakoev as a legitimate leader and representative of the party to the conflict. International organizations are reluctant, they keep pointing at the Tskhinvali regime as one, with which Tbilisi has a problem, and so has to deal with. But Tbilisi is not planning to include Kokoity in the game, rather the opposite. Sanakoev is promoted to talk at official EU and CoE meetings in Brussels in mid 2007. The Tbilisi plan aims at legitimizing Sanakoev and at the same time de-legitimizing Kokoity in the eyes of international community to the extent that the former replaces the latter in the negotiation format. But there are no indications that aim may be materialized soon.

**Stage Three (to be finally reached):** The current Tskhinvali regime should lose its representative status in peace negotiations, and Sanakoev (or whoever replaces him) should achieve the same status in regard to the entire territory of Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone. Erosion and de-legitimization of the ruling regime should be achieved non-violently in Tskhinvali. Public demands are to be registered in Tskhinvali to restore the autonomous status of South Ossetia within the Georgian state. After that the Georgian government and the Sanakoev administration on behalf of South Ossetia sign reconciliation and reunification documents and South Ossetia becomes part of Georgia again. This is the Georgian government’s scenario of how the 16 yearlong conflict should be formally resolved. Chances for the final materialization of this bold plan theoretically exist, but stay slim, as no contours of the mechanism for its realization are yet in view. Nevertheless, Georgian officials continue to repeat that the process is firmly on its track, and months are left until the regime in Tskhinvali falls under the weight of its own inadequacy.

Even if the second stage is completed smoothly and without major obstruction or incidents, it is not clear when the final stage may be reached or how long it may take to fulfill it. The bright side of the things is that the first stage has been completed without violence; Kokoity's warning that Tbilisi was using the "diarchy project" to prepare military intervention did not materialize. The dark side is that the Ossetian community in Tskhinvali turned out to get further intimidated and alienated from the Georgian one. North Ossetians activated their efforts to prove that as a divided society they should work towards reintegration and reunification (obviously, within the Russian Federation), although earlier they looked at different options in a more tolerant way.

Maintaining Russia's role as a main custodian of peace, the international community left no other option for Georgia than seeking for cooperating with Russia and actually buying her benevolence for solving the conflicts on Georgia's terms. This turned out practically impossible, although Shevardnadze had tried it repeatedly. For Russia it was far more important to preserve the pressure tools in South Caucasus than eliminate them with her own hands. The same international community is now encouraging Georgia in its movement to NATO, while Russia is further alienated, and at the same time it is required from Georgia to demonstrate "positive dynamics" in a conflict resolution process dominated by Russia. How does Georgia deal with such a "mission impossible" is difficult to imagine.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Georgia's South Ossetia Conflict: Make Haste Slowly, International Crisis Group. Europe Report N°183, June 7, 2007.

# The Only Way for Georgia is to Be a Reliable and Stable State

# 2007

Interview with George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Professor, Head of the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, by Nina Akhmeteli, Journalist, Georgia Today, November 16-22, 2007.

## THE ONLY WAY FOR GEORGIA IS TO BE A RELIABLE AND STABLE STATE

After the incident in Ganmukhuri the Georgian government has demanded the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from the conflict zone. Professor Giorgi Khutsishvili, Head of the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, shared his view of the recent developments and the possible ways for peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

**GT:** Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze announced that the decision to withdraw Russian peacekeepers has been made but she didn't specify terms in which Russian peacekeepers will leave Georgia, how soon do you think Russian peacekeepers will leave Georgia and how important that decision is today?

**G.KH.:** Such decisions have been taken in the past but as a rule after such decisions are taken people forget about them after some time as the decisions face difficulties and the public attention is moved to other things. Do we have any condition to say that in this case we can reach real results? No. unfortunately there are no such conditions.

**GT:** What kind of conditions in particular are you talking about?

**G.KH.:** First and foremost there should be the UN recognition that Russian peacekeepers violated their mandate, and not only in this particular case, such as Ganmukhuri incident, but in general UN should recognize that Russian peacekeepers violated their mandate, and not only in this particular case, such as Ganmukhuri incident, but in general UN should recognize that Russian peacekeepers do not act according to their mandate.

In all previous documents including the last UN Security Resolution adopted in October UN thanks and emphasizes the importance of Russian peacekeepers, and regarding all those resolutions it is very difficult to imagine today that due to Ganmukhuri incident the UN will change its position. In addition, the mandate of Russian peacekeepers and international observer mandate are linked and interrelated with each other. So, it is impossible to achieve withdrawal of the Russian peacekeepers without any criticism towards the international mission. The UN is an observer of the peace process and the peacekeepers are in the conflict zone according to UN mandate. The lack of progress in Abkhazia is partly the UN's fault and of course they do not want to recognize it.

**GT:** But what if Georgia makes an unilateral decision?

**G.KH.:** Yes, the decision has been made and our government says that according to the agreement signed in 1994, the decision from Georgian side is enough for withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers in one month. It is not completely true. Even if Georgia demands the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers, Russia will demand the prolonging of the mission from the UN. Without the UN endorsement this will be considered as a disputable issue and Russia will delay the process. Even if Georgia categorically demands and Russian peacekeepers leave the conflict zone, Abkhaz side would place their own regular military forces along the whole periphery and would explain it as self-security measures. I think international observers in this case would rule out their involvement in the process and the forces placed without any international mandate will be



much more dangerous. In this case any provocation is much more likely to occur and probably will happen. So, implementation of unilateral decision without international supervision will be followed by catastrophe and everyone who knows the situation in Abkhazia would agree with it.

**GT:** Are there any perspectives for replacing Russian peacekeepers by international forces or changing format after the review of peace process?

**G.KH.:** I doubt it. The review of processes and discussions are ongoing but nothing changes in UN resolutions. International organizations, despite all lip service, are careful with Georgia first of all because Georgia still fails to prove that it can provide stable and reliable policy with regard to conflicts. The only country that agrees to send their peacekeepers is Ukraine but the Abkhaz are categorically against it. And again the replacing should be implemented with the UN consent. The international community first of all estimates the processes from the perspective of stability. In Georgia's case they see the possibility that the region will become even more unstable.

**GT:** What is the way out of the situation when Georgian side says that Russian peacekeepers just worsen and hold back any progress in conflict resolution, and there is a concern at the same time their withdrawal today can just worsen the situation in the conflict zone?

**G.KH.:** The most rational and logical thing in this situation is to activate the international support and make international society influence UN position and its resolutions to make them recognize that Russian peacekeepers act against their mandate. We will have much higher support from international society if we carry out more logical and prudent policy instead of militaristic rhetoric.

Abkhazians today are disappointed with Russia and another factor is that they press towards being closer to Europe, and they see that the way to Europe is going through Georgia which is joining NATO. However, they do not want to talk about any cooperation with the Georgian side because they are afraid of Russia's reaction.

We should use our international friends for launching various large-scale projects that will make Georgia and Abkhazia closer.

In case of South Ossetia it is internationalization and legitimating of Sanakoev's administration, so that Sanakoev would be accepted and recognized as a participant in negotiations as Kokoity is accepted today.

**GT:** That's really interesting – how can Sanakoev be recognized as a side of negotiation format?

**G.KH.:** Sanakoev is an elected president of self-proclaimed republic, and represents part of the population of the conflict zone, and at the same time is the head of the provisional administration recognized by the Georgian Parliament. That is why the international community is doubtful about recognizing him as a conflict side. And, of course, Russia uses this as an argument against his recognition. So, we are making contradictory steps and put in doubt the perspective of the peaceful solution of the conflicts by it.

**GT:** But even if Sanakoev is recognized by the international community, there is a certain opinion that he does not have any support among Ossetians.

**G.KH.:** Sanakoev wasn't brought from Tbilisi: he was in Kokoity's administration in the past and then changed his position, so he can be a prospective factor for peaceful resolution. He does not have support on the other side of the conflict because Kokoity's regime does not allow people to express their opinion.

**GT:** Another argument against Sanakoev is that Tbilisi's support of his administration actually worsened and blocked the dialogue with Tskhinvali...

**G.KH.:** I want to say that no dialogue had been carried on with de facto South-Ossetian authorities for a longtime, and I doubt that there could be any negotiations. Kokoity is a marionette of Moscow and it is very hard to talk about any possible perspectives for negotiations. Sanakoev was a real chance to change negotiations format and if not exclude, at least balance Russia's factor and change the

situation in the conflict zone. There was a slim chance but now because of the conditions I mentioned above it is complicated.

**GT:** Regarding the recent developments in Georgia is there any possibility that the government will use conflict zones for distracting the attention from interior political confrontation and Tbilisi does not exclude militaristic steps towards de facto republics?

**G.KH.:** I think, it is a rhetoric and PR that is increased in pre-election period. Any kind of militarization in the conflict zones will bring very bad results and prevent and slow down the process of Georgia's NATO integration and Saakashvili realizes it.

# A Resolution to the Caucasus war?

# 2008

By Susan Allen Nan, George Khutsishvili, and Lira Kozaeva-Tskhovrebova; Susan Allen Nan is Assistant Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. Professor George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi. Lira Kozaeva-Tskhovrebova Chairs the Association of Women of South Ossetia for Democracy and Human Rights in Tskhinvali. This article was written for the Common Ground News Service. The Georgian Times, Monday, December 1, 2008.

## A RESOLUTION TO THE CAUCASUS WAR?

Washington DC – The Caucasus war this summer pitted predominantly Christian Orthodox Georgia against predominantly Christian Orthodox Russia and the Abkhaz and South Ossetians, whose Christianity, Islam and traditional spirituality weave a complex tapestry of religions cutting across ethnic and political divides.

South Ossetia witnessed ethnic and political tensions over the past two decades, which came to a head in August. Each side has offered competing explanations for their military engagement. Georgian troops explain that they were fighting to repel Russian troops and secure territorial integrity. Abkhaz and South Ossetians tell us they were fighting against Georgian aggression and for self-determination. Russians say they were fighting to protect South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgian attacks and to establish a security buffer around them.

Local peacebuilders also waged a peaceful struggle for a non-violent resolution of the disputes and lasting security for all parties involved.

Beyond official “track one” government-to-government discussions, such as the Geneva talks that convened briefly on 15 October and again on 19 November, long-term peace in the Caucasus will require more creative channels of communication to rebuild relationships across the conflict’s divide.

Unofficial “track two” diplomacy could augment the high-profile Geneva negotiations held earlier this week, in which participating diplomats seem to have made little progress towards an official agreement.

In a process complementary to official “track one” diplomacy, ongoing relationships between civil society peace builders across the Caucasus’ diverse religious, geographic and ethnic communities provide a foundation on which Abkhaz, Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian political leaders can begin building sustainable peace.

Even while bombs were falling in August, and face-to face meetings were impossible, individual peace builders reached out to each other via phone, e- mail, and through the Caucasus Forum Yahoo online group, lamented the war and its human cost, and presented widely divergent assessments of the causes of the war. While they disagree vigorously, these peacebuilders share a fundamental faith in each other’s humanity.

This bridge at the civil society level is useful, but a stable peace will ultimately require that the political leadership learn from this example. Respectful, constructive conversation is possible across the conflict’s divides when political leaders are willing to recognize the humanity of the other side.

These civil society leaders have developed a wealth of insights about the conflict’s dynamics that could usefully inform political leaders’ search for a way forward. For example, over several discussions in unofficial peace building dialogues during the course of the conflict, a Georgian NGO leader realized the importance of building the kind of Georgia in which Ossetians and Abkhaz might want to live, a Georgia with an impeccable human rights record, inclusive

democratic rule, and respect for all ethnic groups. Others learned that sovereignty is not always an all-or-nothing affair.

But there is more.

The same processes that have built this civil society bridge could also help politicians build lasting agreements. A series of periodic informal discussions in quiet retreat settings organized by trained facilitators is a tried and true method for building political agreements that meet everyone's needs. Such discussions engage the highly placed officials of "track one" in the exploratory dialogues of unofficial "track two" diplomacy for "track one-and-a-half diplomacy".

The Abkhaz, Georgian, Russian, and South Ossetian leaders could each send trusted advisors to a series of such dialogues with an open-ended instruction to explore – without commitment – how all groups could collaborate to satisfactorily meet everyone's needs.

In the context of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict that first evolved into war in 1991, followed by a ceasefire in 1992, influential Georgians and South Ossetians participated in a series of four unofficial facilitated dialogues from 1996 to 1998 to keep the ceasefire alive by providing useful input to the official negotiations process.

For example, after a workshop exercise in which pairs of Georgians and South Ossetians together crafted statements that might de-escalate the conflict, the Georgian Minister for Conflict Resolution used phrases from this exercise in his speech in Geneva.

Another dialogue series took place between a mix of new senior participants over three meetings in 2006 and 2007. Initiatives like these can make a difference but require ongoing support and nurturing.

A more sustained commitment to peace negotiations and a multi-level dialogue series by all parties and the international community might prevent the next war.

It's time to try again.

The Georgian Times

'Double standards for Kosovo'

Gogi Khutsishvili

2008

Interview with George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, by Kristine Pataraiia, Journalist, The Georgian Times, Tuesday, January 28, 2008.

Opposition Prepares  
Joint Memorandum

All Georgian opposition parties are expected to sign a joint memorandum on Monday, which will demand that the government should be undertaking preparatory work for parliamentary elections this spring. The opposition parties are expected to join the memorandum, details of which are not yet public. "The key demands remain unchanged: to reinstate the results of the January 3 presidential elections; to suspend the current government; to compose the election commission; to conduct a party list election; to convene the board of the Constitutional Court; to convene the Constitutional Court on a party list; to convene the Constitutional Court on a party list; to convene the Constitutional Court on a party list."

"The opposition had 'taken a year' and stopped protest rallies. "We will submit our demands to the Parliament as we want to launch a dialogue. We offer the authorities to overcome a crisis. If they do not express such a desire [for a dialogue], we will write the political crisis in our country on the Eastern wall through protest rallies," MP Kakava said.

## DOUBLE STANDARDS FOR KOSOVO

### THE STATUS ISSUE, POLITICAL CHALLENGES AND PATH TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

While the discussions on Kosovo's final status process are ongoing, Kosovo is bracing for independence. Kosovar Albanians are eager to see the change in their status while Kosovo Serbs are looking at tomorrow with concerns.

What is really going in Kosovo, how do conflicting sides react to the final status matter, and how does this conflict reflect on Georgia's frozen conflicts. To answer these questions we talked to George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN). He was recently in Kosovo and told Georgian Times many interesting details.

**GT:** What impressions did you bring from Kosovo? What is the situation like there?

**G.KH.:** I brought very interesting impressions from Kosovo. Many things became clear for me, but still many questions were left un-

answered... Why did such things occur in Kosovo? Why didn't they examine other strategies? However, representatives of the EU and the UN told us that they did try all methods, but no attempts could bring peace. They say it is impossible for these two groups to live together, and the international community has already made its decision to grant Kosovo its independence.

**GT:** What attitudes do Albanians and Serbs living in Kosovo have towards Kosovo's independence?

**G.KH.:** These different groups, living on the same land, have very different ideas about Kosovo's independence. Kosovar Albanians (as they prefer to be called) claim that they are the ancient population inhabiting the area, and they represent the majority of the population. Serbs make up only 10 percent of the population. This is not due to expansion or conquest, but it just happened this way, they say. They claim the same rights over the territory as Serbs do. And, they accuse Serbs of ethnic cleansing towards them in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They stress that the international community decided to help them and protect them from further genocide, and "because we have no guarantees that Serbs will not repeat past actions, we need independence", they add. Kosovar Albanians state they need independence not to create a new democratic state but to integrate into a united Europe, which they identify as their mother nation. "Our capital will not be Pristina, but instead Brussels". They share the European Union's values of disregarding territorial borders. "We identify the European Union as our homeland and we do not need those attributes of the state which stands against EU principles", state Kosovar Albanians. This phenomenon is called a post-modern interpretation of international relations. Modern is when we speak about nation, states, etc. while post-modern is about regional alliances or globalization.

Serbs have a completely different viewpoint. They wholly speak in modernist terms, and say that everything Kosovar Albanians say is a lie. Serbs firmly believe that Albanians want to create their own state, though they know they are not ready to make this step.



**GT:** Is Kosovo ready for independence and what are the public sentiments there?

**G.KH.:** Kosovar Albanians know very well that Kosovo is not ready for independence. Kosovo is not able to become a state with all essential attributes of statehood. But, Serbs think the main goal of Kosovars is to integrate into a greater Albania. This will be the regeneration of a greater Albania, which will be negative for Europe, and generally for international politics and international relations.

Kosovars know that Kosovo's economy is degrading. The unemployment rate is about 65-70 percent, while it is only 23-25 percent in Serbia. There is a legitimate government in Serbia when Kosovo represents only the embryo of what the real government should be. All decision making powers lie in the hands of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which is temporary mission. The Kosovo Force (KFOR), which is the NATO force located in Kosovo, keeps order and oversees the province. Therefore, Kosovars themselves have no role in determining their own affairs. The population is mostly unemployed and mainly earns their living by selling drugs. If this were the case in many other countries, they would have been labeled as a black spot, or members of the black list. Therefore, it is clear that the international community has double standards for Kosovo and different criteria in order not to hinder Kosovo's independence. Despite such conditions, Europe still holds the position that Kosovo should be given independence.

**GT:** Which countries have a stake in Kosovo's recognition or non-recognition?

**G.KH.:** The main stakeholders are Albania, USA, countries of EU, and Macedonia... all on the side of Kosovo, and only Russia backs Serbs. As Serbs state, behind this stands Albania, the main stakeholder in this case. When we discussed Serbs' statements with EU and the UN representatives, they smiled and said that Serbs speak wholly in old modernist frames, while Kosovars think in very reasonable manner. So, Kosovar Albanians' position stands closer to those who are the decision makers in international politics today.

However, it is also interesting that Kosovo's independence is strongly backed by the United States. As for Serbs, they see Russia as their strategic partner, not because Serbs consider Russia as their number one partner, but because they feel isolated by the international community because of Milosevic, and only Russia is assisting them. They say that there were dictators in many other countries. They had the first colored revolution and overthrew a dictatorial regime. "We did this with the help of USA, but international society is still rejecting us", they say.

**GT:** If Kosovo declares independence and the international community recognizes it, what will Serbs do?

**G.KH.:** Serbs say that in this case they will not recognize Kosovo as an independent territory. Even Ahtisaari's plan is unacceptable for them, because it practically means Kosovo's independence. Serbs consider Kosovo as an autonomous province on Serbian territory. They say that in the case of Kosovo's independence they will secede from Kosovo and join Serbia. However, if the international entities recognize Kosovo with its full territory, such secession could inspire another conflict, and military operations could reoccur. Serbs claim they will use weapons and other military means if required. But in Pristine they are unserious about this. They firmly believe that NATO forces are the strong guarantees that military operations cannot re-emerge. However, history teaches us that sometimes the opposite can happen. So certain kinds of difficulties are still possible.

**GT:** As Serbs are located in central Europe it seems that the first priority for them should be EU integration, nevertheless, they feel isolated from the EU and, as a result, are building closer ties with Russia. Will it be an impediment to the EU integration process?

**G.KH.:** Belgrade needs modernization; the economy is stagnating and badly needs foreign investments, which Russia is unable to grant. Serbs know that they need the EU. However, they are so angry with the EU for its unjust behavior towards them that they are ready to remove EU membership from their agenda.

Meanwhile strategic partnerships between Serbia and Russia are strengthening. The treaty over the oil and gas pipeline corridor, which runs on Serb territory, is already signed. Russia is creating a platform in the middle of the EU. Kosovo's independence will greatly help this process. Europe ignores the danger coming from Russia, although this danger is serious. They believe that they can solve all problems, without much headache.

**GT:** Can Kosovo's final status decision become a precedent for Georgian conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia? And, what role does Russia have in this case?

**G.KH.:** Kosovo already became a precedent for other conflicts. Formal recognition of Kosovo's independence does not change anything. The fact that the international community supports separatism is itself a precedent, and this precedent already has its results.

Russia is using this moment. I don't think that after Kosovo's formal recognition Russia will simultaneously recognize Abkhazia and south Ossetia. Russia itself has conflicts in these regions and unlike many believes, it will not make this step. But the main thing here is that the backing of separatism has already happened, and we will experience its results further. So it is essential to consider Kosovo's situation realistically.

There is also a danger for Serbs from Russia, which plans to strengthen its positions on the Balkan Peninsula, although Serbs also do not acknowledge this danger. They state that they are not afraid of this because Russia is not the first investor in the country. It is only one among others. They are not economically dependent on Russia and it is only the political alliance. However, Russia may find other levers to use against Serbia. It is clear that Russia is using the moment to strengthen its geopolitical standing in Europe.

**GT:** When will Kosovo's independence be finally declared?

**G.KH.:** We were in Kosovo at the end of December and we were told a very interesting scenario about how the declaration of Kosovo's independence should happen.

In the beginning of February, Kosovo will declare independence unilaterally. However, as they do not want to use the word unilateral, they call this a “coordinated declaration of independence with the consent of the USA, EU, and other international organizations”. There will not be a referendum; they will say that this is the decision of the majority population. Within a 24-hour period, the EU and the USA will acknowledge the fact. Recognition from the UN will come later. The letter noting this fact will be sent to UN’s Secretary General, who will express indignation and present the topic to UN’s general assembly. Events will come in this sequence according to the scenario I heard.

**GT:** What is the role of Albania in this case?

**G.KH.:** Albania is neutral and has no involvement in the conflict.

Kosovars also acts as if they have no connection with Albania. They state that they do not even have a common language. Kosovars claim they have many complexes. They say that Serbs are an old nation, which they consider wittier than they are. However, reality shows something else. While Serbs make old-fashioned statements labeling themselves as a nation lagging, Albanians manage to obtain the support of the international community.

**GT:** Is it in the interests of Europe if Kosovo joins Albania in the long-term perspective?

**G.KH.:** There are no talks about this. This perspective either does not exist or is considered less probable. There is only discussion of EU integration. People think how to acquire better living standards and how to get better education in EU countries. They are thinking very practically. No one plans to stay in Kosovo and begin the process of building state structures. But who will do this for them? They believe that Brussels will manage this, while they are busy with their work.

**GT:** Could you speak about the similarities and differences between the Kosovo and Georgian conflicts?

**G.KH.:** Yes, there are many similarities as well as differences between these conflicts. The main similarity is the case of separation.

Another similarity is ethnic cleansing – which took place in the both countries. Nevertheless, a difference in case is that in Kosovo, the local minority committed genocide towards the majority population, and in the case of Abkhazia, the majority acted against the minority population.

The main difference between these conflicts is the level of involvement of the international community. While they pay much attention to the Kosovo conflict, their involvement is only slight and ineffective in Georgian conflicts.

There was a war in Kosovo and both sides of the conflict committed severe violations.

There is also a similarity in the conditions of the refugees. Another similarity is the role of Russia, which is on the side of separatists in both cases.

George Khutsishvili from Vienna, Austria (12-14 August 2008):

RUSSIA CONTINUES TO “PUNISH” GEORGIA.

GEORGIA’S ALLIES ARE TRYING TO HELP.

THE WORLD CONTINUES TO WATCH

# 2008

By George Khutsishvili from Vienna, Austria, 12-14 August 2008,  
<http://www.iccn.ge/eng/director-s-column/item/520-george-khutsishvili-from-vienna-austria-12-14-august-2008>.

## RUSSIA CONTINUES TO “PUNISH” GEORGIA, GEORGIA’S ALLIES ARE TRYING TO HELP, THE WORLD CONTINUES TO WATCH

Since the start of the crisis, a new informational war has been spiraled across the huge media space controlled or influenced by Russia. Russian media sources reiterated the official version of events: Georgians have launched an unprovoked surprise attack on South-Ossetian city of Tskhinvali which has destroyed the city completely, killed around 2000 civilians, and made the rest flee from the area. It is yet to be investigated what happened on 8<sup>th</sup> of August. The figure of casualties in the breakaway region is not proven or confirmed by any evidence. The Russian media and officials avoid mentioning the damage and losses suffered by the Georgian side, or the fact that the Russian troops have invaded, bombed and purposefully damaged infrastructure in places – including densely populated urban areas – not related to the conflict zone of South Ossetia. They depicted the whole operation as “restoring the order” and creating a buffer zone around the zone of conflict. Georgia is

qualifying the same operation as a military occupation of the sovereign country followed by war crimes.

As part of the Russian public relations strategy, immediately before his meeting with President Sarkozy started, President Medvedev announced that “the aggressor has been punished” and therefore the Russian military operation in Georgia was over. As soon as these words appeared on the world’s TV screens, the media coverage of Georgia crisis has diminished significantly: the problem is on its way to settlement, so let us turn to other issues. Yet this did not last long, as it became clear that the Russian military did not intend to halt their operations and the assault on and looting of the Georgian town Gori near the capital Tbilisi happened after the agreed ceasefire document was made public.

As soon as the Sarkozy-Medvedev ceasefire plan was announced, CNN posed a question that has not in those days found an extended or plausible answer: is the current crisis in Georgia going to affect Russia’s relations with the outside world? The analysts seemed reluctant to go deeply into such a slippery soil, but the question persisted on TV screens. The framework of the question was easily readable from the numerous footages and discussions conducted by CNN that swarmed the screen in the same days: are investors likely to lose or decrease their interest in Russia because of the Georgia crisis, while the investments in Russia are proving to be extremely rewarding and profitable? That prospect looked brighter for an outer eye than a prospect of e.g. BP who already invested billions in Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, with a greater gas pipeline crossing the same unstable zone in the Caucasus as an immediate future’s project. The economic environment was pre-determining the answer to the posed question: the investors will not be disappointed by the shocking and ruthless showdown on a small neighboring nation. Undemocratic and authoritarian as the current regime in Moscow may be, there are little worries about the safety of the investments made in Russian market. And what matters more in international relations?

At the same time, President Bush's and especially Condoleezza Rice's statements stood out as growingly supportive of Georgia, demanding from the Russians to stop their military and observe the agreement achieved between the EU President Sarkozy and the Russian President Medvedev. Secretary Rice compared Russian invasion in Georgia to the events in Czechoslovakia back in Soviet times and stressed this was not 1968 on the calendar. She spoke about the coming isolation of Russia on international scale if their leadership does not stop the invasion and stick to the ceasefire agreement.

Could the international support for Georgia in those days be more salient or efficient? Diplomats deem it could be definitely more salient and, to some extent, leading to a more efficient pressure on Russia, if not for the numerous warnings previously made to Georgia's leadership by the world's leaders not to make risky steps in the conflict zones, as this would immediately turn against Georgia with long-run unpredictable consequences for regional stability. Georgian leadership always assured friends and partners it did realise risks and made valid calculations, but left everyone uneasy in view of the growing military expenditures and preparations in the country. Realists admit that no one should have expected the external partisan intervention of the West in Georgia that might have brought armed confrontation with the Russian troops, nor even imposing of the economic sanctions on Russia. In all the voices reacting to the crisis, the UN so far remains silent and neutral, preferring to cover behind the shield of "insufficient information" and "need for consultations".

Still, the circle of heads of state standing around Saakashvili at a mass support demonstration in the Georgian capital on August 12, 2008 – heads of state of Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – might have been wider and stronger. The countries recently liberated from the post-Communist influence are swiftly sympathising with and readily consolidating around a victim of Russian imperialism, being careful at the same time not to lead their own relations with a dangerous neighbour to a critical stage. Others,

2008



having found and applied a balancing treatment with Russia in a more distant past, like Finland, or Western Europeans who today largely depend on Russian energy supply but believe they can regulate and control the consequences, seem unlikely to take a more active stance. There seems to be no international consensus at the moment on supporting the US approach and assessment of the crisis and its consequences. But this will also change if Russians before the whole world's eyes persist in invading and damaging the sovereign state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

2008

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Georgia, The 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Central Asia and the Caucasus: Confrontation in the Caucasus, "Roots, Dimensions and Implications", The Institute for Political and International Studies, Tehran, Iran, October 28-29, 2008.

## PROPORTIONS OF DISPROPORTION AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (THE STATES OBLIGATIONS AND THE AUGUST 2008 RUSSIA-GEORGIA CONFRONTATION)

Russian leaders qualified their military operation in Georgia in August 2008 as "a reaction to the Georgian aggression against South Ossetia". What they have never mention is that the same Russia – along with the entire international community – adhered to recognition of territorial integrity of Georgia – including Abkhazia and South Ossetia – in all post-Soviet years; basing on which logic, the Georgian attempt to regain Tskhinvali by force qualifies as a disproportionate use of violence by the state towards its own insurgent province, while "aggression" usually pertains to actions towards a different state. This is said in order to stay just, not to justify violence.

Russia's reaction to what was happening in South Ossetia on August 7-8, 2008 was qualified internationally as disproportionate. This has mainly acquired the meaning of disproportionate in terms of scale and diversity of damage (occupied territories, human loss-

es and suffering, waves of IDPs, burned villages, destroying of the military and civilian infrastructure, etc.) Within such an interpretation, Russia would be considered to have acted “proportionately” if it stayed within the conflict zone of South Ossetia, and did not move out of it. Yet Russia’s (re)action has also been inadequate in terms of the target of reaction. This is in fact the same “purposeful inadequacy” that is characteristic of terrorist actions. Although theoreticians have thoroughly ruled most state powers out of the definition of terrorism, and made it a prerequisite of “subnational groups not sponsored by the state”, we still have clear cases of state-run and/or state-sponsored terrorism in this world. Regarding Russia’s military operation in Georgia, we have a spectacular action with a distinct PR component, aimed at large-scale effect of intimidation rather than acquisition. The target of intimidation was threefold: the Georgian president was punished for being arrogant, the whole Georgian nation was punished for having him a president, and the whole of West was warned about the consequences of integrating Georgia in Euro-Atlantic space, and more generally, the NATO expansion into “Russia’s backyard”. Because that exactly was demonstrated through Russia’s actions against the Georgian nation.

And it is also a universal truth that the whole nation cannot be held responsible or subject to punishment for the deeds of the regime. Georgian society was neither informed about, nor did it subscribe to the military strategy that was unfolding on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of August in South Ossetia. Since then civil society and political groups in Georgia have been asking questions, which the Georgian leadership has not answered in a satisfactory manner.

At the same time, judging about responsibilities for the August crisis and its consequences, it is worth remarking that there were clear indications the Russian military machine was preparing for the “spectacular punishment” operation at least since spring of 2008, and only in August they decided they got a substantiation for unfolding it. Georgia was in previous months receiving increasing messages about possible dramatic consequences of its NATO aspirations. The “deadline” was outlined as somewhere before December 2008

(the month of the NATO ministerial that was to consider Georgia's and Ukraine's applications for the MAP). The showdown has actually happened much earlier...

On the international scale, the geopolitical consequences of the August crisis revealed increased security [primarily, energy security] concerns of the stakeholders resulting in probing the ideas of alternative oil- and gas-pipeline routes, restructuring the systems of partnerships and (inter-dependencies, and new quest for leadership roles in the Black and Caspian Sea regions. Regional powers are trying to secure their immediate future vis-à-vis the increasingly assertive Russian factor.

Russia is challenging the classic *Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi* ("what is allowed for Jupiter, is not allowed for the bull"). Russia's logic has been: If USA interfered in Iraq, changed the regime and took supervision of the country for a considerable time, or if NATO was allowed to bomb Yugoslavia and take charge of Kosovo, so why would anybody be surprised if Russia – a compatible actor on a world scale – acted in a similar way in Georgia? The argumentation is simple: whoever on the world scale decides to sort out things in what he considers as his own backyard, and is strong enough to get away with it, cannot be questioned about that.

At the same time, Russian leaders are always trying to find legal justification to what they are doing, partly from adapted or sometimes manipulated international law principles, and partly from the practices and rules of game of the big-power realpolitik. In a given case, Russian actions against Georgia have allegedly been caused by the responsibility to protect their so-called "citizens" in South Ossetia (the territory internationally acknowledged as part of Georgia), and actually – an artificial Russian "diaspora" created through distributing Russian passports in order to have a basis for interference. Yet there are serious objections in regard to Russia's reference to international law to justify its actions. First of all, this applies to the Russian interpretation of the new internationally adopted norm of Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

The UN World Summit Outcome Document<sup>1</sup> adopted at the General Assembly High-Level Plenary Meeting in September 2005 defines “Responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”. The states are responsible to take measures to protect their citizens inside their borders, but it does not in any way contain or imply justifications for interference in another state’s affairs or territory.

As has been argued in the 19 August 2008 statement of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P)<sup>2</sup>, “R2P, as codified in 2005 by the General Assembly, is not a legitimate basis for Russia’s military actions in Georgia”. Three reasons are brought forward to back this conclusion.

The primary ground stated for intervention – the protection of Russian citizens abroad – is beyond the scope of the R2P norm. The 2005 Outcome Document does not confer authority on an individual country to take direct military action to protect its nationals located outside its own borders.

The scale and intensity of the military operation went beyond the direct protection of the South Ossetian populations allegedly under threat. “Russia’s intervention was tactically and geographically well beyond the scope of what would be needed to protect the physical security of the South-Ossetian populations from mass atrocity crimes”, argues the GCR2P statement.

In the absence of UN Security Council approval, there is no legal authority for an R2P-based military intervention. “The Russia-Georgia case highlights the dangers and risks of states, whether individually or in a coalition, interpreting global norms unilaterally and launching military action without Security Council authorization”.

As clarified by Gareth Evans, President of the International Crisis Group and a co-author of the R2P formulation, “it needs to be made clear beyond a doubt that whatever other explanation Russia had

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<sup>1</sup> See in [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) links.

<sup>2</sup> See in [www.globalr2p.org](http://www.globalr2p.org).

for its military action in Georgia, the R2P principle was not among the valid ones”<sup>1</sup>.

Unlike the question of protection of citizens inside or outside the state borders, which has just been clarified, the question that still needs clarification in international norms is the validity of the reference to anyone in another country who additionally owns your passport, as your citizen, especially if this pertains to persons living in a conflict zone, and especially if your passport was conveyed to a citizen without consent of the country of which the conflict zone is a part. With such a practice, any country that has a double citizenship law could enlarge their population and territory by distributing passports abroad and then exercising in interfering in other countries’ territory and annexing it under pretext of protecting their own citizens. The international community needs to develop a clear approach and formulate and adopt relevant norms in regard to these issues.

2008

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<sup>1</sup> Gareth Evans. “Russia and the “Responsibility to Protect”, The Los Angeles Times, 31 August, 2008.

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# 2009

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## AN ACADEMIC APPROACH TO THE CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

### **“A GEORGIAN CONUNDRUM: TEN VERSIONS ON THE AUGUST 2008 WAR”**

#### **WHAT HAPPENED IN AUGUST 2008? TEN VERSIONS**

Reintegration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and reconciliation with the populations had long been on Georgia’s agenda before the five-day war broke out with Russia in August 2008. For many years there has been great frustration with the protracted and ineffective peace process.<sup>1</sup> Then why did the Georgian leadership decide on such an unlikely and apparently senseless act as attacking Tskhinvali and declaring the city “liberated” when the result was still unclear? Russia’s 58<sup>th</sup> Army in North Ossetia had just performed large-scale exercises and the Roki Tunnel, a lifeline connecting Russia with

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Khutsishvili, George. The Abkhazia and South Ossetia Cases: Spoilers in a nearly collapsed peace process. In Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond (eds), Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution. Tokyo-New York-Paris: UNU Press, 2006, pp. 282-300.

South Ossetia, was under Russian control. Several interpretations developed in the Georgian and external political discourse with regard to the events of August 7 and 8. These were discussed with different degrees of intensity and credibility, but all deserve to be mentioned, as they create a spectrum of the imaginable. The list begins with the more conservative analyses and continues on to more unlikely and shocking interpretations.

- The war was the result of an “inadequate and incompetent management” in response to Russian provocation (polite interpretation supported by a benevolent segment of Georgians);
- The war was the inevitable outcome of Russia’s previous actions (the interpretation officially supported by Georgia);
- The catastrophe was caused by wishful thinking and group-think – it lost the sense of proportion and reality on the Georgian side (proposed by Western and Georgian experts);
- It was a failed trade-off – there was an alleged agreement, by which South Ossetia was promised its legitimacy if Georgia gave up Abkhazia, yet Georgians were cheated again (short-lived interpretation);
- The US military was involved in the Russian invasion (conspiracy theory supported by anti-American segment of Georgian society);
- The war was provoked by entities in East Europe and post-Soviet space – Georgia was encouraged to confront Russia and was promised EU support (another conspiracy theory);
- The war was a laundering of mismanaged defense funds (interpretation held by some Georgian economic experts);
- The war was used as a tool for activation of international aid as a result of the collapsing economy and world financial crisis (interpretation held by some Georgian economic experts);



- The war was an attempt to instigate a global / East- West military confrontation or at least a recurrence of the Cold War where Georgia would play a pivotal role (conspiracy theory);
- Saakashvili consciously played a Russian game – he masterminded his own defeat and played into Putin’s hands (another conspiracy theory).

Each interpretation will now be discussed in detail.

As a result of an intricate Russian trap<sup>1</sup> (Putin’s *domashnie zagotovki*), Georgian leadership responded to armed assaults of Ossetian *militia* on Georgian-populated villages in South Ossetia as part of a desperate attempt to intimidate separatists and protect the Georgian villagers. There were indications that the Russian peacekeepers would not interfere.<sup>2</sup> Most evidence suggests that such an operation did not actually require entering and occupying Tskhinvali with the entire Georgian military.<sup>3</sup> The Georgian army was unable to occupy or hold positions in the town<sup>4</sup> and the entire operation was doomed due to poor management, which was clear even before the heavily equipped Russian 58<sup>th</sup> Army entered the territory on August 8.

The second version excuses the Georgian government from any fault or mismanagement and does not consider the war to have been a military failure for Georgia. This is the official story given by the Georgian leadership and its mass media since August 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> In retrospect, Russian TV’s broadcast of Putin’s words were perceived in Georgia as a threat that had materialized in the August war.

<sup>2</sup> Head of the CIS Peacekeeping Forces General Kulakhmetov reacted on August 6 to the growing tension with a statement that the PKF would not interfere if a conflict broke out. This was interpreted by some analysts as a sign of a deal achieved between Georgian and PKF, however, spurious.

<sup>3</sup> According to the State Minister Temur Yakobashvili, Tskhinvali was a gate to the Georgian-populated villages, and without taking and withholding it the task of creating a protective shield would fail. This argument is dismissed by both military and civilian experts (cf. the Tagliavini Commission Report as well as Independent Experts Club research “Crisis in Georgia, 2008: Preconditions, Reality, Perspectives”. Tbilisi: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> In the evening of August 7, Saakashvili announced that Georgians controlled the whole of Tskhinvali and most part of South Ossetia was under the Georgian army’s control. However, historical facts deny these statements.

According to this interpretation, the whole chain of events was inevitable, the *casus belli* was instigated by Russia, the Russian army had already “invaded” by August 7, and Georgia was forced to respond to the external military aggression by protecting the country’s sovereignty from an overwhelmingly stronger aggressor.

Less discussed at the time, however, now considered more probable, is the interpretation, which claims that Saakashvili and his team had already decided upon war by the summer of 2008. The Georgian army was well trained and equipped, the newly elected parliament was dominated and controlled by the ruling party and would support Saakashvili’s decisions, the critics and political opposition were sidelined, the population was frustrated by the international community’s inability to resolve the conflict, and the government-controlled media was able to broadcast the desired coverage. All the components were available for a unique opportunity to aggressively restore the country’s territorial integrity, including the “dead season” of August and the Beijing Olympic Games to serve as global diversions. There were however, obstacles as well. The US and the EU had given categorical warnings to Georgia against any such actions, however, Georgia considered this obstacle manageable. Georgia was tempted to take advantage of such a rare constellation of favorable circumstances. The loss of the sense of reality resulted from non-transparency and a closed-door practice of strategic decision-making by a small group of loyalists clearly suffering from groupthink.<sup>1</sup>

As the dramatic events of August 7-8 unfolded, this interpretation considers what Saakashvili was counting on in terms of a trade-off or trump that could be used at the right moment. As variants of a

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wikipedia on the phenomenon psychologists refer to as “groupthink”. As a result of the closed-circuit wishful thinking and disregard for external opinion, a distorted world outlook formed and Georgian press swelled in pre-August years with quoting War Hawks in high places e.g. “We now have the army with which we can reach Moscow”; “Russia is in agony”; “Isn’t it time to declare war on Russia?”; “Russia’s demolition already started in Northern Caucasus”, etc. After the defeat in August, one of the same officials confessed to foreign journalists they couldn’t believe “Russia would go that far in its response”.

possible trade-off gained publicity, people even considered a return to Russia's sphere of influence, but more often wondered if Russia is abandoning South Ossetia in exchange for Abkhazia. This short-lived interpretation was soon dismissed after the days of the conflict.

This interpretation maintains that despite the official warnings by the Bush cabinet, some War Hawks in Washington and in NATO circles may have encouraged Georgia to wage war against Russia. This interpretation, which can be classified as a conspiracy theory, claims that the war was used to test new weapons and to probe Russia's preparation for war and capacity for swift military action.

Some Georgian analysts have offered the following interpretation of the strong continuous support of Georgia against Russia by Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Ukraine (in descending order of strength). In post-Soviet Eastern Europe, Russia has been perceived as a formidable actor trying to reassert its old sphere of influence, which in itself rules out an open confrontation. In an attempt to undermine Russia's strength, the vulnerable, post-Communist states encouraged Georgia's actions. Supporting Georgia in that way would highlight the Eastern European state internationally as a more rational player and even allow the state to serve as a benevolent mediator to a more resolute and reckless partner. Hence, the Eastern European states issued no friendly warning to Saakashvili's action in August 2008; they only provided encouragement even despite the desperate situation.

This interpretation claims that the war was a large-scale money laundering operation. The Georgian leadership knew about the mismanaged oversized military budget (over one billion dollars in the first half of 2008) and decided to write it off in a battle that had no chances for success, but could raise international sympathy. NATO no longer had to be cheated about the Georgian army standards and this would avoid any investigation into the purchases of outdated and damaged equipment.

Economic stagnation and threats to stability of budgetary and national currency in light of the rampant global financial crisis caused

Georgia to seek large amounts of foreign aid quickly. After the August war, Georgia received 4.5 billion dollar in recovery aid, which helped Georgia avoid bankruptcy. Some analysts argue that this tool will be tried repeatedly in the future.

This interpretation identifies a global plot that attempted to instigate an East-West confrontation, Third World War, or at least a relapse of the Cold War. A confrontation of the US and Russian navies in the Black Sea would result in a situation resembling the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, with unpredictable consequences. This version dwells on a psychological picture of Georgian leaders, who are irresponsible, adventurous, and possessed by global ambitions.

2009

A final conspiracy theory purports that there has been a hidden rapport between Saakashvili and Putin. For years, under the disguise of militant rhetoric, Saakashvili has been playing into Moscow's hands, transferring control over strategic objects and energy sources in Georgia to Russian state-controlled companies, and finally had to participate in finalizing the Russian plan of annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, along with curbing the NATO expansion to the Russian borders.

These versions have been considered at different times with different degrees of credibility; some of them are mutually exclusive and a few interpretations have already been dismissed by experts. Out of the ten versions, the third interpretation seems most probable in its entirety. In order to consider a hidden factor in the behavior of Saakashvili (a factor that might explain otherwise inexplicable moves and provide coherency), one must analyze a broad spectrum of issues shaping the current fragile reality and the foreseeable prospect.

### **ON THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN GEORGIA**

After the "Rose Revolution" of November 2003, there was renewed hope for the solution of long unresolved conflicts and the development of new global markets. For Russia the change of power in Georgia contained both the risk of a further Western influence as

well as the advantage of beginning negotiations with new leaders unmarred with Shevardnadze's unpopular image as a "destroyer of the empire". In the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, cautious expectations emerged about speaking to new leaders "unstained with blood of war". Saakashvili reacted with enthusiasm to these claims, calling himself "a guarantor of the interests of Russian business in Georgia" and "President of Ossetians and Abkhaz in service of their security and development". However, in the summer of 2004, a sudden change of tone occurred for no apparent reason; a power operation was launched, which aggravated the quiet situation in South Ossetia, and Russia was declared to be the top foreign enemy of Georgia.

Years passed, and there are no longer great expectations for the color revolutions as "beacons of democracy". Georgia's government is a closed, self-centered power conglomerate that largely neglects its society's concerns and reactions. The government is attempting to build an inconsistent state system based on the domination of power structures and an imbalance between the branches of government. The parliament is weak, the courts and mass media are not independent, and the president has excessive power. This is essentially a "team rule" characterized by groupthink that has already been detrimental in a number of critical situations.<sup>1</sup> Leaders who left "the team" were immediately labeled as traitors, however, "the team" continues to maintain the image of a virtual unity by means of its president.

In a way, there is a fertile ground in Georgia for political experiments if one considers its past and the legacy of public consciousness. Double standards, imperial domination, and the artificial election system of the Soviet Union deepened Georgian society's perception of the futility of any public activity, the inevitability of authoritarian power, and a general distrust for any sort of a liberal

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<sup>1</sup> It suffices to mention the catastrophic aggravation of government opposition confrontation during the mass protests of November 2007 that caused mass repressions and snap presidential elections and the manner, by which decisions were made in the days of the August war.

rule. Polls have shown that, despite an urge to find a solution to the Abkhazia problem, a unitary state has always been the preferred model for Georgia, and federalism was never considered. There has been no public consensus demonstrated for any concrete schemes for reunification.

The most disturbing manifestation of the post-revolutionary power phenomenon in Georgia is the decrease of confidence that the society has in the Georgian government and the perceived negligence of the government in regards to this issue. There seems to be little understanding of the potential danger of dividing the Georgian society. Georgians have suffered through many decades of totalitarian rule, have not had experience with democracy, and are generally unprepared for self-organizing to defend their rights, ensure fair elections, or utilize public protesting to promote necessary changes. Approval ratings are sinking and emigration levels are rising.<sup>1</sup> The weakness and disorganization of the political opposition alone fail to explain the deceptive stabilization that President Saakashvili's team was able to create after the politically tumultuous spring and summer of 2009. Other factors that contributed to this were wide-spread frustration and nihilism, enhanced by the apocalyptic pictures propagated by the government-controlled television broadcasting.

## GEORGIA AND THE BREAKAWAY REGIONS

A source of confidence for Georgians is their historical ownership of the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>2</sup> Damaged national pride and the defeated small nation syndrome prevented the wider public from encouraging civil society groups to maintain the oppor-

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<sup>1</sup> In early 1990s almost a million Georgians settled abroad, mostly in Russia, as there was a smaller language barrier there and the conditions were familiar and adaptable. Currently, it is not the actual number of immigrants that is of concern, but rather the wide-spread frustration.

<sup>2</sup> Georgia considers Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Georgians use the terms of "Samachablo principdom" for the center and Shida Kartli for the region) as integral parts of the historically formed Georgian state..

tunities of public diplomacy and from properly utilizing the rare cases of restored trust. Russian interference was blamed for what happened between the populations (allegedly, relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia would have easily been restored if Russia had not supported the separatists) and the only perceived solution was greater pressure on Russia from the international community and the accelerated process of Georgia's admittance to NATO. Since 2003 very little attention was devoted to building relations or at least maintaining communication with the breakaway provinces; relations have gradually deteriorated and the walls between the populations grew. Russia's recognition of the territories further solidified these barriers.

Both the elite and the public in the breakaway regions hold the opinion that Georgia has not acted properly for the reconciliation offer to be taken seriously. Georgia has not officially acknowledged in the entire post-Soviet period any share of responsibility or expression of regret for the nationalistic policies that caused casualties, alienated Ossetians from Georgians, and caused the Georgian-Abkhaz war in 1992. Despite the legitimacy of Georgian concern and the humanitarian crisis of 1993, Georgia could have offered more to the separatist populations. This would have increased credibility and helped to build confidence between the conflict parties, regardless of the possible Russian resistance to the process.

Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze, and Saakashvili were very different as leaders, but they all acted in accordance with certain radical groups in Georgian society by not compromising with separatists. A more diverse public that was tolerant to peace-building efforts gradually lost its confidence. By the summer of 2008, the population was tired of the sluggish peace process and desired a forced solution.

## **GEORGIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS AFTER AUGUST – A CONTINUOUS CRISIS**

As a result of the August 2008 war, relations between Russia and Georgia have deteriorated further and reached a point of almost

complete alienation; diplomatic relations with Russia have been broken, any economic or cultural communications have become scarce, and the chances of renewed hostilities remain high. The post-war developments have had regional implications by slowing down the integration of Georgia into the Euro-Atlantic space, which corresponds with Russia's aspirations to halt the expansion of NATO to the post-Soviet area.

The Tagliavini Commission Report highlights the responsibility of all sides involved in the conflict. "The shelling of Tskhinvali by the Georgian armed forces during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008 marked the beginning of the large-scale armed conflict in Georgia".<sup>1</sup> The report stresses here that Russia had originally created tension and during the August confrontation extended military action to greater parts of the country outside the acknowledged conflict zones. As the report continues, "consequently, it must be concluded that the Russian military action outside South Ossetia was essentially conducted in violation of international law".<sup>2</sup> Although the report is otherwise comprehensive and balanced, it does not pay enough attention to the cornerstone issue of the Russian justification of its strategy, which blames Georgia for the events of August: the international concept known as the responsibility of the state to protect its citizens or shortly, the Responsibility to Protect.<sup>3</sup> This concept refers only to the responsibility of a state to protect its citizens within its own borders. The same concept had been manipulated by Russia in pre-war years by distributing Russian passports in territories officially recognized by Russia as belonging to a different state. Russia then considered the Russian passport owners to be Russian citizens and thereby interfered in the domestic affairs of the

2009

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, September 2009, Volume I, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> See the UN General Assembly Output Document of 2005, the materials of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and clarifications made by the initiator of R2P Dr. Gareth Evans, former Chair of the International Crisis Group (ICG).



third party state. This was done under the pretense of protecting Russian citizens, but was actually used to fulfill geopolitical goals.

The prospects of resolving the Georgian conundrum remain unclear. The Georgian leadership portrays itself before the Georgian people as possessing leverage to pursue a tough line towards Russia, while there is no more active external support to it. A simple reasoning reveals a simple truth: all the processes that might reduce tensions and threats, lead to trust-building, normalise relations and create a chance of restoration of integrity in future are sacrificed to the political wellbeing of current leaders who cannot communicate with each other, and the societies are compelled to reconcile with that.

## 6. GEORGIA'S DEGENERATIVE TRANSITION

GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI

# 2009

Once upon a time – admittedly not so long ago historically – Mikheil Saakashvili, Viktor Yushchenko and their closest allies were perceived in the East as bringers of democracy, and as Western “Messiahs” whose ultimate mission was to democratise Russia. They envisioned themselves as latter-day American-style founding fathers; their idea of a free, prosperous and law-based democratic future set them apart from the “cowboys” around them who were governed by mob rule. Their message to their own societies was clear: you may have misgivings, but we will not be swayed, as we know we are doing the right thing for everyone’s future. Since 2004, Saakashvili’s favourite phrase has been “Whatever happens, we will bring this battle to an end”. The initial achievements of Georgia’s “Rose Revolution” were impressive: among other improvements,

Democracy's Plight  
in the European Neighbourhood

Struggling Transitions  
and Embroiling Dynasties

Editors:  
Michael Emerson and Richard Youngs

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Georgia, Democracy's Plight in the European Neighbourhood, Editors: Michael Emerson and Richard Youngs, Centre for European Policy Studies; Brussels, 2009.

## GEORGIA'S DEGENERATIVE TRANSITION

*“We all know where we came from. We differ in determining where we are going. And this increasingly becomes the feeling of not only post-totalitarian so-called “new democracies”, but also of comfortable and stable Western societies. The rampant economic crisis may have added some value, but there are deeper – and earlier manifested – reasons for doubting the unquestionably democratic future for all parts of new and old Europe”.*

G.K. 2009.

Once upon a time – admittedly not so long ago historically – Mikheil Saakashvili, Viktor Yushchenko and their closest allies were perceived in the East as bringers of democracy, and as Western “Messiahs” whose ultimate mission was to democratise Russia. They envisioned themselves as latter-day American-style founding fathers; their idea of a free, prosperous and law-based democratic future set them apart from the “cowboys” around them who were governed by mob rule. Their message to their own societies was clear: you may have misgivings, but we will not be swayed, as we know we are doing the right thing for everyone’s future. Since 2004, Saakashvili’s favourite phrase has been “Whatever happens, we will bring this battle to an end”. The initial achievements of Georgia’s “Rose Revolution” were impressive: among other improvements,

petty corruption was significantly reduced; power and gas supplies were ensured; many roads rebuilt and buildings repaired; and the corrupt traffic police were dismissed entirely and replaced with a reliable mobile patrol.

No less impressive was the agreement signed with Russia regarding the closure of Russian military bases stationed in Georgia since Soviet times. It was announced that EU and NATO memberships were just around the corner, and EU symbols and flags appeared in public places alongside the newly-adopted national ones, as though Georgia was already an EU member. It was only later that the revolutionary leaders' lack of understanding of democratic ideals and principles, and their disinclination to follow them, became apparent.

November 23, the date of the revolution, is celebrated in Georgia as a national holiday. However, the old enthusiasm for this date is long gone.

For the leader of a revolution to be true to his name as both a revolutionary and a self-proclaimed initiator of democratic reforms, these reforms must be prominent during the revolutionary party's time in office. The introduction of fair elections is of paramount importance, legitimising the revolutionaries' belief in democracy by ensuring that future leaders come to power democratically. Such a change would also prevent the establishment of a destructive pattern of recurrent revolutions. Georgia's political structures still need to be reformed before a change in power can take place through elections, a non-revolutionary process. The "revolutionaries" have shown that they are unwilling to create an environment that would allow oppositional political thought to gain a foothold in society. Non-state TV channels cannot function without state interference, and domestic business is kept under state tutelage. Since the May 2008 elections, the ruling United National Movement – the president's party – has had a constitutional majority in the new parliament, with only a nominal and practically non-functional minority opposition. The government perceives this as another victory for democracy in Georgia: political alternatives are seen as unnecessary if the ruling majority is doing a "good job".

A comparison between early 2004 and mid-2009 shows a dramatic deterioration in perceptions of the now widely-discredited “colour revolutions”. Instead of the hoped-for open societies with developing market- and law-based state systems and the ability to promote democracy, the former Soviet countries have become authoritarian power conglomerates badly in need of democratisation themselves. Georgia’s ailing economy and almost non-existent agricultural industry are unable to provide sufficient support to the process of social reform.

### **A PATH PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS**

In the years following Georgia’s colour revolution, the wider world gave too great a credence to information provided by the government and the government NGOs (GONGOs). This led to an inaccurate perception of the true state of affairs, and subsequent unrealistic expectations of future development. The Bush Administration gave the Georgian leadership unconditional support, which assisted it in centralising power.

After the January 2004 inauguration of the almost unanimously elected President Saakashvili, constitutional changes were introduced. These changes shifted the balance of power away from the parliament and towards the president. An ultimatum was then issued to those who had profited under the Shevardnadze regime, forcing them to yield part of their fortune to the state in exchange for a guarantee of safety. Although this was technically illegal, international observers were still blinded by the euphoria of a popular victory and took a rather benign view of the Georgian government’s arrogant, risky manoeuvres. The leaders insisted on their need of an extraordinary amount of credit in order to have the maximum possible resources to carry out the difficult reforms and ensure democratic rule. Improvements in financial management and extreme forms of “fundraising” led to a ten-fold increase in revenue in a two-year period. Remarkably, the majority of resources and international aid were allocated to military spending: over \$1 bil-

2009

lion in the first half of 2008 alone. However, Georgia's resounding defeat in the August 2008 war demonstrated in spectacular fashion how inefficiently the augmented defence budget had been allocated and managed.

The August 2008 war divided Georgia's political situation into a "before" and "after". Before the war, it had been relatively easy to manipulate elections; oppress TV companies; marginalise the opposition and ignore criticism, all the while retaining international support. After August, it seemed unlikely that this situation would continue. Georgia's leaders sensed that a fundamental change had taken place; a change that was not merely the inevitable reconsideration of unconditional US support under the new administration. International media perceptions of Georgian policies had become largely negative; this negativity spread and coloured people's views of the country as a whole. This feeling remained until spring 2009, when passive US and EU support was gradually reestablished, although Georgia had fallen down the list of international priorities.

However, nobody in Georgia itself had any doubt that the authorities would resort to whatever repressive measures they deemed necessary to retain their power if a real threat emerged from the growing opposition movement or from public protest.

The leaders of the "Rose Revolution" have demonstrated that they can learn lessons and diversify their approach, which has come as a surprise to everyone. A banner demanding President Saakashvili's resignation has been hanging outside parliament since the mass protest on 9 April 2009, throughout the subsequent opposition activism, but there has been no police intervention to remove it. Nor was there even any attempt to halt the demonstration itself. However, groups of "unidentified" masked people have threatened and attacked demonstrators on several occasions, mostly during the hours of darkness. Although a number of these individuals have been photographed or recognised, there have been no effective investigations into the matter. It seems that the long-lasting stalemate may end in a temporary reaffirmation of the status quo.

Independent civil society organisations have become increasingly involved in the process of mediation that aims to find a solution to Georgia's political crisis. This intervention is deemed necessary because the ruling party does not have enough legitimisation nor is it representative enough to ensure national stability and sustainable development. In addition, the opposition fails to offer a viable alternative given its lack of clear vision and public support, and its inability to raise sufficient funds to guarantee the necessary political changes.

### **A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

Civil society in Georgia is primarily associated with the non-governmental sector, which for most of the population means NGOs. To date, Georgia has had no experience of significant formal trade union activities, which have – along with some religious institutions – shaped so much of the Western concept of civil society.

In the mid 1990s Georgia's non-governmental sector began to flourish thanks to Western assistance, a development encouraged by Zurab Zhvania, the then-Speaker of Parliament. The civil sector supported the newly-independent state's proclaimed move towards Western values. Freedom of expression was curbed to a greater extent by the stereotyped opinions of the masses than by direct government regulations. The official stance toward NGOs was liberal, although large grants required the government's tacit approval or GONGO partnership. After the first serious political crisis during Shevardnadze's rule in 2001, the "young reformers" group, led by Zhvania and Saakashvili, created a political opposition that invested in certain NGOs and media outlets that went on to play a vital role in the events of autumn 2003.

After the "Rose Revolution", many of its active protagonists with prominent roles in civil society took up key posts in the government, parliament and the presidential administration. In the immediate aftermath, Rustavi-2 TV declared that the Georgian civil sector had become "disintegrated and hollow", indicating that the ambitious

leaders had formerly been at the core of Georgian civil society. Yet the media's claim also proved that the new government had a certain political credo, which could be interpreted as follows: Georgian civil society turned into a democratic government in order to democratise the country. Once this function had been fulfilled, there was no longer a need for a strong non-governmental sector or a free media. In theory, the new leaders' entry into government was supposed to lead to the development of a democratic power structure rather than bureaucratisation or even authoritarianism.

The "logic" for the government's approach was that once democracy had been established and the devoted democrats were firmly in power, there was no longer any reason to tolerate the opposition. Seemingly, the only argument against applying this theory was that Georgia's Western supporters – on whom the country's survival largely depended – insisted on the existence of the the opposition. Since the death of wealthy TV mogul Patarkatsishvili removed the main critical challenge from the media, the political opposition was increasingly tolerated, although it was periodically accused of having links to Moscow. The government's attitude also explains the partiality of the judicial system, and the fragility of private property rights in Georgia.

When it comes to foreign policy, relations with Russia are a huge problem. But the Russian question is not being addressed rationally: formal appeals for dialogue have traditionally been combined with irritating, counter-productive moves, making the prospect of territorial integrity more unrealistic than ever before. These failures have increased the Georgian public's level of discontent with the government; the August 2008 war with Russia led the population to despair of their country's prospects.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF BECOMING A CIVIL NATION**

One positive change under the new administration has been the government's restraint of the fundamentalist trends developing within the Georgian Orthodox Church, the civil institution with

the most – and the most consistent – authority in the country. Non-mainstream churches and confessions and religious minority groups felt much safer under the new leadership. It was expected that a similar feeling of security would develop among ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups, hopefully leading to reconciliation between the secessionist communities. However, in practice, a state system that barely defends human rights and is selective in its application of justice proved to be an unfavourable atmosphere for the encouragement of social integration among ethnic minority groups.

The existence of stereotypical attitudes in Georgia toward secessionist Abkhaz and South Ossets highlights the challenge of successfully integrating different ethnic groups into society. Prior to the revolution, most public discussions of the unresolved conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia degenerated into lengthy and ultimately fruitless debates on how the conflicts should be qualified: as ethnic; ethno-political; ethnoterritorial; political or something else entirely. The idea of “ethnic” conflict has always been dismissed; the government does not perceive Georgian society as capable of fomenting xenophobia or suppressing minorities. The problem was usually classified as political and Russian-imposed. It was maintained that if Russia ended its battle with Georgia and left the country to its own devices, Abkhaz and Ossets would be able to live harmoniously in the same state. This unrealistic and counter-productive assessment of the situation is indicative of the Georgian tendency to relieve itself of responsibility for a problem by shifting this responsibility to a powerful external party. This approach removes the need for uncomfortable dialogue with persistent minority communities. Shevardnadze had to reject “Georgian-Abkhaz” and “Georgian-Osset” as potential labels for the conflicts. Aware of the likely consequences, he avoided the label “Georgian-Russian”, and instead the situation became known in official domestic and foreign channels as the rather unwieldy “Conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia”.

Saakashvili went through the same process, although his policy was much more proactive (and self-fulfilling) in illustrating the chill-



ing reality of the Georgian-Russian conflict. This made the resolution of the Abkhaz and South-Osset issues a rather unrealistic outcome for the near future.

Power politics, zero-sum games, strong rhetoric, the feeling of an external threat and a black-and-white interpretation of reality have made militarised mindsets increasingly common among Georgia's population. When televised political debates need to cite an expert, they usually opt for Carl von Clausewitz; when a strong, successful statesman is required, Ronald Reagan is the politician of choice; and if the history of Europe is under discussion, Otto von Bismarck is quoted. It is likely that the Georgian government lamented the end of George Bush's presidency, and hoped that John McCain would replace him. President Obama has been viewed mostly in terms of his stance towards Russia. Also under consideration are the potential consequences for Georgia if the US example prompts the West to negotiate existing problems with Russia using a soft power language that the Georgian administration deems too subtle for use in dealing with such a country.

### **GEORGIA AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS**

So far, Georgia appears to have been largely unaffected by the global economic crisis. This apparent paradox is due to the ephemeral nature of its economy. The stability that the Georgian lari (GEL) has enjoyed since its introduction in 1995 can largely be attributed to stabilisation measures undertaken by the National Bank of Georgia. These actions followed the IMF's recommendations and required the injection of huge sums of hard cash each year. As a result, inflation rates have been low. Since the August 2008 war, foreign aid (\$4.5 billion in total) has played a pivotal role in stabilising the domestic financial market and the banking industry. How much longer the Georgian economy can stave off the effects of the global crisis thanks to internal manoeuvres and foreign support remains to be seen, but some experts believe that time is running out. If the economy encounters difficulties, public discontent will

no doubt increase significantly, and the opposition would channel this sentiment to urge the president's resignation and early presidential elections.

The government is currently attempting to minimise media coverage of economic difficulties, thus limiting the material the opposition can use against it. At the same time, it is trying to satisfy the primary needs of the basic consumer market, and avert debates regarding housing, poverty and social issues by maintaining that Georgia is under external threat. Every so often, high-ranking officials reveal Russia's plans for an invasion of Georgia and subsequent regime change. A recent example of this is the discussion of Russia's alleged plans to invade the Baltic States, Ukraine or Georgia in order to restore its domination over its "disobedient" pro-Western neighbours.

2009

## CONCLUSIONS

Georgia's "Rose Revolution" leaves as its legacy an unusual power phenomenon. There has been an attempt to establish a kind of "velvet authoritarianism", based on stagnant stability and maintained by continual references to an external threat: Russia. The idea of this threat justifies the authoritarian political system that has been implemented, and is reminiscent of the Brezhnev era, although on a smaller scale. There is an unwritten agreement between the power and the people, a policy of mutual non-interference unless money is at stake: wealth should be shared rather than used for political ends. A loyal citizen does not criticise the government's policies and tactics. A loyal citizen should not question how it can be possible to declare that escape from Russian domination is the goal while more and more strategic assets and energy systems are being transferred to Russian control. The power phenomenon that is developing in Georgia pushes the established boundaries of what can only be termed "imitational" or "facade" democracy.



# 2009

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Chief Investigator, “Georgian and Abkhaz Perspectives on Human Security and Development in Conflict-Affected Areas”, A Policy Research Initiative, Published by Toledo International Centre for Peace, 2009.

## SYNTHESIS PAPER ON THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH WORK OF THE GEORGIAN GROUP

### OVERALL GOAL OF THE PROJECT

The overall goal of the project was to make an reframe the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict process by opening new channels of between the parties, involving new internal (civil society actors and experts) and external actors (facilitators or experts) and examining the main issues which could promote co-operation at functional levels, whilst not overlooking conflict resolution as a final goal, with all the stakeholders.

The researchers of the two teams concentrated in parallel around the following issues:

1. Energy and transport (rail, air and sea ports) and telecommunications;<sup>1</sup>
2. Security (non-use of violence) and law enforcement (organised crime, drug trafficking, police training);

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<sup>1</sup> At a later stage of the research it was decided not to focus on transport in the framework of this project.

3. Human Rights issues, such as minority rights, refugees and internally displaced persons (hereinafter IDPs) and education.

### **RESEARCH PRODUCED AS A BASIS FOR THE SYNTHESIS PAPER**

This Synthesis Paper is based upon the research produced by four independent Georgian experts as reflected in their respective policy papers within the framework of the European Commission-supported international project “Multi-Track Dialogue on the Human and Economic Dimensions of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict”. The author of this paper has also taken the experts’ personal clarifications and explanations into consideration as well as the information generated during discussions at research team meetings and those with the project management.

2009

The researchers comprising the Georgian team and papers are:

- Shalva Pichkhadze, Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: The Problem of Refugees/internally displaced Persons;
- Alexandre Kukhianidze, Ways of Resolving the problems of Crime and Ensuring Security of the population in the Zugdidi District of Georgia Along the Left Bank of the River Enguri;
- Lasha Tughushi, Social and Economic Development of the Conflict Areas;
- George Katcharava, Contributing to Regional Development in the Conflict Area: The Smart Operation of Enguri Hydro-power Plant.

It needs to be noted as well that at different stages of the research Vakhtang Khmaladze and Marlen Dzeladze were invited to consult the project.

Each of the experts has conducted on-site empirical research which became an integral part of their respective policy papers. Before considering the crosscutting points, similarities, commonalities and or parallels in both the narrative texts and the research and polling results which are included in the papers, we can con-

clude that the overall character of the research yields important and encouraging implications for local and central authorities on site, potential donors and investors and the European Union.

### **POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

Serious changes took place in a geo-political context affecting the project activities over the last months of its implementation. The project started in the beginning of 2008 when Abkhazia and South Ossetia represented seceded regions of Georgia and self-proclaimed republics governed by de facto authorities. At that time, the international community was uniform in its acknowledgment of the territorial integrity of Georgia with not a single state in the world recognising Abkhazia or South Ossetia's claims for independent statehood, based upon the referenda made on their territories in late 1990s, as legitimate.

The status quo preserved throughout the post-war period (since the early 1990s) has prompted experts to qualify the unresolved disputes in Georgia as so-called "frozen conflicts" given that no form of recognition – such as granting them the status of insurgency or belligerency – has ever been on the agenda of international organisations as concerns the seceded regions of Georgia. Although negotiations on the peaceful resolution of conflicts were taking place, they failed to gain momentum and never approached the stage for a peace agreement to actually be drafted. Numerous UN Security Council Resolutions and other binding and non-binding international documents appealed to the parties to observe a cease-fire, abstain from any steps leading towards destabilisation and find ways to build confidence. The UN-led peacekeeping operation of a 132-member unarmed observers mission (UNOMIG) supported by the limited (approximately 2000-strong) contingent of CIS (actually Russian) military units took place in Abkhazia whilst the OSCE led the peacekeeping process in South Ossetia until 2008 through Joint Control Commission (JCC) and four 500-strong military units

(one from each of the signatories of the quadripartite agreement) deployed since 1993.

Various efforts at public diplomacy, which developed in several venues dating to 1995, represented a brighter light against the bleak background of stalled negotiations and the problems of unreturned masses of IDPs. Activists from NGOs and civil society were enthusiastically engaged in numerous peace-related initiatives, contacts, general or thematic meetings and training sessions which were organised and took place with the participation of the Georgians and the Abkhaz within the framework of different projects coordinated and funded by international organisations. This enthusiasm was based upon the hope that the political negotiators would achieve progress sooner than later and that the general bulk of the IDPs would return to their homes, especially those who lived beyond the Gali District of Abkhazia. Gradually, the repeated failures of the political process had their impact upon the civil society initiatives which started to become less proactive and systematic with the once powerful track-two process degenerating into sporadic and irregular small group meetings which were in no way able to render a serious public impact. This is another social effect which the “frozen conflicts” have with the passage of time.

The situation with South Ossetia and Abkhazia started to change after Kosovo was recognised as an independent state in February 2008 in an act which the international community refused to see as creating a precedent for the legitimising and satisfying of secessionist claims in different parts of the world. The negotiation processes were still stalled at the time of the March 2008 meeting of all project participants in Madrid which enabled some projections to be made for the coming months even though there were some changes beginning in the situation in and around Abkhazia. The parties accused each other of a violation of the cease-fire which gave rise to increased tension whilst Russia began to unilaterally build quasi-interstate relations with the de facto authorities thereby altering status quo and its own commitment regarding the status of the seceded territories. From July 2008, the epicentre of tension

shifted from the Gali District of Abkhazia to the Georgian-populated areas of South Ossetia with its culmination having come in early August 2008 when a five-day Georgian-Russian war followed by a humanitarian crisis in Georgia resulted in the Russian Federation recognising Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. Whilst these changes naturally seriously impacted and complicated the project's implementation, the participants agreed that the new circumstances would not preclude their work and that they would continue to work towards the end goals.

The Sarkozy-Medvedev cease-fire agreement, which was signed on 12 August 2008, was a step towards stopping a further advance of Russian troops into Georgian territory. In addition, it contributed to regaining stability and preventing the fear within Georgian society that the catastrophe would deepen and have an even greater destructive impact. Unfortunately, however, the six points of the agreement have hitherto not fully been implemented. Although the situation on South-Eastern borders of the Abkhaz conflict zone was not a primary focal point of the agreement, the lack of the complete implementation of the six-point agreement together with the rapid changes taking place in the conflict zones—militarisation, depopulation and heightened human security risks — has created some ambiguity in both assessing the situation and in offering forth policy solutions. The project activities, however, developed and were implemented according to the agreed timelines within the mutual understanding that communication between the societies on the different sides of the conflict divide should be maintained despite any unresolved matters whilst developing confidence and trust between each other's civil society groups within the spirit that areas of common concern exist and should be addressed together. It bears mention that there was no incident wherein the project participants doubted, questioned or obstructed their joint work even during the extremely difficult post-August 2008 period.

A new challenge appeared in January 2009 when the Government of Georgia unexpectedly announced that it had signed a Memorandum with the Russian energy giant, Inter RAO UES, in

late December 2008 as regards the joint control and exploitation of the Enguri Hydropower Plant (hereinafter HPP) which had hitherto been managed by the Georgian side with agreement to supply the territory of Abkhazia with a portion of electricity produced by the Plant throughout the entire post-conflict period. The text of the Memorandum has not been disclosed to the public or energy experts although it is easy to surmise that future Georgian-Abkhaz bilateral cooperation therein will become extremely difficult if Georgia and Russia sign agreements following the Memorandum which will effectively put a Russian company in control of the entire site. The uncertainty surrounding the terms and consequences of the Georgian-Russian Memorandum over the Enguri HPP resulted in difficulties for one of the Georgian team members, Nikoloz Orvelashvili, to successfully complete his research and submit a policy paper as originally agreed. Following an internal decision of the project's directorate, Mr. Orvelashvili was replaced by George Katcharava who undertook a related research direction concerning the Enguri HPP and produced the policy paper and recommendations which comprise an integral part of the work of the Georgian team.

2009

The signing of the aforementioned Memorandum revealed that there are at least two layers — if not double standards — within Georgian official policies regarding relations with Russia; namely, verbal confrontation, even antagonism on the surface, and tacit agreement on practical matters based upon a coincidence of interest and short-term goals of individual persons upon a deeper communication level (cf. Johan Galtung's negotiation conception).

Despite not being explicitly stated within their research findings, the Georgian experts have concluded that there was an overlapping of similar interests between the Georgian and Russian authorities within the Memorandum in removing the Abkhaz from any joint management and administration of the Enguri site. The Russian motivation is clearer: control over the production of electricity, its distribution and the development of a very promising cascade system is a powerful economic and political tool of regional importance (viz. Turkish, Armenian, Azerbaijani and other dimensions) and is, of



course, a serious lever of pressure upon Georgia. On the contrary, it is much more difficult to find a rationale in Georgia's actions with regards to the wider issues related to the conflict resolution process. The motivation of the Georgian side, however, may be traced to numerous examples which took place in 2004-2008 which show that the "Rose Revolution" administration counter-productively seeks to reach conflict management and transformation through imposing boycotts, pressure and isolation upon the de facto authorities in the conflict zones rather than developing confidence-building measures and an environment of trust and stable communication. The Enguri HPP was the last example of stable and mutually beneficial cooperation remaining upon the conflict junction in Georgia (the other although upon a lower and legally more dubious scale, was the Ergneti market at the entry to Tskhinvali which was dispersed in summer 2004). With Georgian officials still making it a policy to isolate and push the other party, to submission through limiting the access to vital resources and leverages, the reasons become clear for their cooperation with Russia in developing a joint (although disproportionate by definition) control over a strategic energy plant so that the Abkhaz are left totally offside. This risky adventure, however, may result in making the Georgian side vulnerable in the case of an escalation of tensions and Russia deciding to exert pressure upon Georgia.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH TOPICS/FOCI AND THE THEMATIC SYNTHESIS**

The topics of the research undertaken by the Georgian team comprised the following four areas:

- a) The problems of IDPs, the vulnerability of the "shuttlers" to the conflict zone and the security of the population dwelling in the vicinity of the conflict zone;
- b) The problems of crime and security of the populated areas neighbouring the conflict zone and the possibility of cooperation between authorities;

- c) The issue of cross-border trade, the social problems of depressed regions and the economic stimuli of areas bordering the conflict zone;
- d) The issue of the energy supply of the population on both sides of the conflict zone and mutual economic and social benefits from the joint development of new energy incentives (finally not submitted).

The above set of research issues has crosscutting, common or interrelated points with the four individual and multi-focused topics being able to be grouped into two: (a-b) investigations of the issues related to safety, crime alleviation and enhancing the security of the population and (c-d) exploring the stimuli to address the issues of welfare, income generation and poverty reduction in the conflict-affected areas. The linking feature between the two groups is the social one. Furthermore, the two groups can be integrated into one; that is, (a-b-c-d) which explores the ways in which to improve the environment for human security in and around the conflict zone. The human component is the, overall common point in all of the research undertaken by the Georgian team given that the project's work is directed towards looking for opportunities to mitigate and resolve the current confrontation through enhanced security measures and an improvement of the living conditions for the population affected by the conflict.

That said, however, the research findings and their implications did spread out in different directions beyond the local realities to the levels of considering Caucasian and Black Sea regional energy systems and the issues of collective security in which cooperation venues and participation between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides is intrinsic.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH ISSUES AND THE ISSUE SYNTHESIS**

Crosscutting issues are visible throughout the research works of the Georgian team. These include:

- Almost zero-trust between the communities and a high level of negativity in the adversary's image;
- Uncertainty in the formal and actual status of the returnees to the Gali District of Abkhazia and the insecurity which comes from it;
- A high level of instability and crime and the need to co-operate on both sides of the conflict zone to address the criminal situation;
- The quest for the possibility of cooperation between local authorities across the conflict divide in tackling the issues which exist on the respective sides. The research done by the Georgian team demonstrates the advantages of such a co-operation vis-a-vis the existing situation whilst the parallel research done by the Abkhaz team confirms the validity of such a conclusion made by the Georgian experts.

The four policy papers elaborated by the Georgian experts define a specific set of issues in focus. It is of further interest to go beyond these concrete issues and provide a broader context which also allows for the presenting of other important aspects within. The research focus of each expert, therefore, falls into a broader spectrum of issues. The common points of all the relevant issues may be grouped with regards to situation, needs and challenges. As previously stated, crosscutting issues, common ideas or commonalities exist within and amongst the research areas. These include but are not limited to the following:

**Common Issues Regarding the Situation:**

Almost zero-trust between the sides, lack of communication, refusal of power structures on both sides to cooperate in tackling the matters of common concern, traditionally depressed regions, serious drop in living standards and human security after August 2008, evidence of the potential of civil society on both sides to prevent tension and a growth in crime, evidence of unexplored opportunities emerging from cross-border trade, cooperation and joint exploitation of objects, etc.

**Common Issues Regarding the Needs:**

Prevention of crime, enhancing human security, efficient control of the borders, creation of conditions for trade and the movement of goods and persons, civil society participation in controlling the power structures, the establishment of a preferential regime for trade and cooperation, coordination of civil society efforts addressing the human concerns and resolving crisis, etc.

**Common Issues Regarding the Challenges:**

Russia's pro-active effort to dominate and control the region, apprehension on both sides of the provocations and incidents leading to a growth in tensions and a renewal of the hostilities which exists in the population, the negative consequences of isolation which may breed new confrontations, various negative effects resulting from the lack or absence of communication between the sides, etc.

**OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The key foci that may be pointed out in research analysis conducted by the Georgian include:

- Control and reduce the state of organised crime and enhance the security of the population alongside the cease-fire line which follows the course of River Enguri before and after August 2008;
- Improve the attitude of regional and local administrative structures with the support of the Ombudsman's office and non-governmental organisations in Zugdidi towards the possibilities of cooperation between Georgian and Abkhazian sides;
- Find a reasonable compromise in registering the Georgian returnees in the Gali District of Abkhazia following international practice and observing their human rights and freedom of choice;
- Although members of the administrative structures of the conflicting sides were not polled in this study owing to their

approaches towards the settlement of the conflict, it may be inferred that the IDP community manifests its preparedness to co-operate with the other side more often than the representatives of the ruling powers;

- Improve the social situation in the depressed region by means of fostering cross-border trade and the free movement of persons;
- Disseminate objective and reliable information through media concerning the security situation in the respective areas on both sides of the conflict zone (Gali and Zugdidi Districts);
- Develop cooperation in joint management and exploitation of the energy systems stemming from the potential of the Enguri HPP;
- The conflicting sides should ad maximum refrain from the further politicisation of the problems of the IDPs.

Lasha Tughushi's conclusion regarding the exceedingly difficult socio-economic situation of the conflict zones which may lead to a humanitarian catastrophe may be taken as a general conclusion for the whole area under study. He proposes the creation of a legal base for the system of a preferential regime (exempt from taxes on production and turnover) for economically important (agricultural) products of local origin and the free and secure movement of goods, services and persons across the Enguri border upon which a wide range of programmes leading to the development and diversification of cross-border trade can be developed and which will result in the economic rehabilitation of the most depressed part of the conflict affected area whilst at the same time contributing to the economic development of the Zugdidi District of Georgia. Therein, the most important political consequences of the implementation of such measures would include the overall general stabilisation of the region thereby creating a better environment for developing dialogue and conducting peace negotiations.

Shalva Pichkhadze states that support should be extended to researchers and activists from the Georgian and Abkhaz civil societies

in their efforts to prepare and publish up-to-date and completely de-ideologised textbooks and instruction aids in history and geography which would be distributed amongst Georgian schools in the Gali District. To that end, it is desirable to involve European experts such as, for instance, those from EURO-CLIO (as also indicated in Pichkhadze's recommendations to the EU).

Owing to the paucity of reliable information from the Gali District, a programme or project should be elaborated for raising the awareness of the returnees regarding the events taking place on either side of the confrontation. This can be achieved through training journalists, organising logistical support for the local independent press and electronic media and establishing contacts with a view to exchanging information between and amongst journalists from other regions.

Alexandre Kukhianidze states that the August 2008 events have dramatically deteriorated the level of security of Georgian citizens residing alongside the course of the River Enguri. The attitude of the local population to their day-to-day security has also changed in that they currently see the major threat to their well-being as the deployment of Russian troops in Abkhazia whereas previously it was the existence and activities of criminals.

Despite the extreme tension between the conflicting parties alongside the cease-fire line, representatives of the law enforcement structures and civil administration authorities – as well as organisations championing civil rights together with the majority of the common residents of Zugdidi and those living in close proximity to the cease-fire line – are in favour of the resumption of Georgian-Abkhaz relations through multilateral meetings with a view to exchanging information and enacting other forms of cooperation.

The abovementioned representatives also are of the view that the European Union should expand the mandate of its monitoring mission (EUMM) on the territory controlled by the Georgian authorities or promote new projects aimed at improving security

in the conflict area without waiting for permission to exercise the monitoring of the territory of Abkhazia.

As Kukhianidze suggests, “The European Union... could help elaborate a well designed and mutually acceptable long-term Security Action Plan along the River Enguri underpinned by consistent and logical stages of strengthening security with the participation of various beneficiaries such as police forces, representatives of central, regional and local administrative structures; local communities and individual citizens, ombudsmen, non-governmental organisations, the mass media, local businesses and donor organisations. The elaboration and implementation of such a plan would considerably improve the security of those residing alongside the cease-fire line. Such a plan could well be based upon the preliminary recommendations proposed in this policy paper”.

From a comparative analysis of the research findings and recommendations, it is readily concluded that they are interlinked; that is, you cannot develop social and economic rehabilitation programmes in the “frontline” areas unless you achieve control over crime and illegal trade and ensure human security (especially as concerns returnees and “shuttlers”) which, in its turn, requires a political will on both sides to support a detente and a rapprochement and to develop a dialogue at all possible levels.

According to George Katcharava, the development of expert proposals on rehabilitation, development and joint exploitation of the Enguri HPP’s potential with the aid of international partnership and/or sponsorship will help to establish a unique framework under which the main task of confidence-building for the both sides of conflict divide will have a suitable ground. The depolarisation of the peace process and making it issue-oriented will help to decrease the level of confrontation amongst the sides. The Enguri Cascade rehabilitation can be one of the most important tools for reaching this target.

The institutional arrangement of this initiative and the whole format suggests that all parties involved will cooperate with each

other. This in turn can be translated in the establishment of a process which will assist political efforts of the resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia. An important aspect of this initiative could also be the creation of a safe and suitable environment for human development on the both sides of the River Enguri. The facilitation and activation of trade, cultural exchanges and the creation of commercially viable opportunities will definitely help to improve the social conditions of the people leaving in the deprived and depressed conflict affected areas.

Additionally, there are some political, legal and security risks which should also be addressed. These are serious issues which can undermine the whole idea but at the same time have a very positive impact once all of the parties have reached an agreement and act in full accordance with its provision. Overall, the opportunity and the momentum for the implementation of such an initiative should be realised and certain efforts should be made in order to create a suitable ground for the implementation of this idea.

Georgian expert considers three different policy options and, based upon the careful discussion the pros and cons of each of them, comes to conclusion that the most advantageous seems be the option – establishment of the Consortium, with equal representation from Georgian, Abkhazian, Russian and the EU sides – which is supported by several arguments. Firstly, all partners participate upon an equal footing which thereby makes format indiscriminate and which will serve as basis for developing trust and agreeable working relations between the partners whilst eventually en the sustainability of the proposed format. Secondly, this arrangement ensures additional incentives reinforcing Georgian-Abkhaz cooperation within a positive experience which can be used in the future as concerns other aspects of peace-building Georgian-Abkhaz reconciliation. Thirdly, it will be the first time that international actors and participate in a multilateral format of cooperation which in turn will increase the credibility of the whole process. Fourthly, this option, if successful, can serve as a role model for other potential plans operation across the conflict divide which will benefit and positively



influence the dynamics of the transformation. Fifth and lastly, one of the primary merits of this format is its depoliticised nature which provides a basis for sustainability despite political difficulties which may arise around the conflict resolution issue. It is worthwhile mentioning that the discussed option may be materialised only in case the Georgian state ownership on the Enguri HPP cascade is not questioned by any member of the proposed Consortium.

It should be made clear that the abovementioned proposal may materialise only in case that existing legal obstacles to it are eliminated, e.g. corrections/modifications are introduced in the currently effective Georgian Law on Occupied Territories.

### **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION SYNTHESIS: MESSAGES TO BE GLEANED**

The common point in all of the policy papers produced by the Georgian team is that cooperation between the sides upon a wide range of areas is possible and would be mutually beneficial and that the EU-supported dialogue on a number of vital issues is the necessary condition for unfolding this potential. Moreover the papers also support the idea that the EU should take a proactive stance in promoting communication channels and problem-solving mechanisms.

There is a sense of the acute need for rehabilitation as well as economic development projects in each of the abovementioned regions within which there is a sharp deficit of investments, money resources, work places, consumer goods and a quality infrastructure.

The necessary prerequisite for economic development and an improvement of the social conditions in the aforementioned areas is the provision of assistance in stabilising the political situation of which promoting a restoration of trust and traditional economic contacts (first and foremost in trade) between the conflicting sides is an important element.

Within this reality, it is of utmost importance to resolve the problems for financing different projects and protecting investments by

means of establishing international funds aimed at the rehabilitation, stabilisation and economic development of these areas.

As previously mentioned, the research done by the Georgian team demonstrates that both the human security and the socio-economic conditions in the conflict affected areas have decreased dramatically and the breaking off of the earlier operative, channels of communications between the sides has had a multi-fold negative effect upon the situation on site.

Certain messages can be gleaned from the conclusions and recommendations put forth by the Georgian team and formulated as follows:

**Message One:** There is both a need and an expectation in statistically representative groups of Georgians and Abkhazian respondents to revive a multi-partite format of regular meetings, preferably under the aegis of the UN, the EU or the US (the US is amongst the expressed preferences on the Georgian side) following the abolition of the Chuburhinji format with powerful factors on both sides, hindering a timely and due consideration of this matter EU input would be extremely important towards promoting a mutually accepted systemic form of communication in order to activate the dialogue between the sides and facilitate the problem-solving. This will objectively lead to more predictability and reduce tension.

According to one of the recommendations from Alexandre Kukhianidze: “Despite the extreme tension between the conflicting parties alongside the ceasefire line, representatives of the law enforcement structures and civil administration authorities – as well as organisations championing civil rights together with the majority of the common residents of Zugdidi and those living in close proximity to the cease-fire line — are in favour of the resumption of Georgian-Abkhaz relations through multilateral meetings with a view to exchanging information and enacting other forms of cooperation”.

**Message Two:** The politicisation of the issues negatively affects the prospects of solution. Discussions on all matters which represent a stumbling block for developing communication between the

sides – such as question of the status of territories and citizenship of the returnees – must be postponed until the basic conditions for overcoming the current critical situation are moved sufficiently forward.

The existing situation shows that Georgian authorities are not able to promote trade, cooperation and dialogue between the conflict-affected communities. According to Kukhianidze, the whole area resembles a front-line with the constant expectation of a renewal of hostilities on both sides. Following his consultations with T. Yakobashvili, Georgian State Minister for Reintegration, Tughushi assures that the Government of Georgia will not create obstacles and so it is necessary to activate the international organisations which have a mandate of operating on site (at the moment, it is only the UNOMIG with a mandate accepted on both sides and the EUMM which is accepted only on the Georgian side).

**Message Three:** The Russian authorities can contribute to the confidence-building measures and the proposals outlined below by not preventing their development, especially when it comes to the Georgian population in the Gali District taking part in the programmes. It should be understood that development of the confidence-building measures and mutually beneficial proposals is in the interest of all sides.

### **Possible Areas of Future Cooperation**

1. With due account of the complicated socio-economic situation of the returnees and proceeding from the experience of European Union activities in the depressed areas, it is recommended that the EU begin to stimulate and promote business initiatives in which returnees would take an active part. To that end, the Georgian team proposes the establishment of international funds (including income-generation and grant-and/or credit-giving programmes) in order to promote small businesses in the depressed areas on both sides of the conflict divide.

According to the team's recommendations, the proposed funds would support promising projects for the rehabilitation of the de-

pressed regions, primarily under the aegis of EU structures, with the goal of increasing the economic potential of the parties directly involved and enhancing regional stability.

The Georgian team proposes the establishment of two international funds; namely, the International Investment Fund and the International Fund for Rehabilitation and Development which would be interconnected by their functions and goals but not formulated as branches of one joint enterprise given that one is essentially for commercial means and profit whilst the other is non-commercial.

An agreement between the conflicting sides is a necessary prerequisite for the establishment and operation of the abovementioned Funds. The agreement can be prepared through the mediation of the European Union which then can become a guarantor of compliance for the parties.

It is desirable that these Funds be managed or co-managed by representatives of civil society including the returnees' non-governmental organisations on site (Pichkhadze, Tughushi). According to all the experts, increasing the role of civil society is an important factor towards achieving the necessary link between the impoverished population and the local authorities so that the situation with regards to human rights and property rights is monitored.

2. One of the most promising areas of possible cooperation between the sides is the joint quadripartite exploitation and development of the potential of the Enguri HPP but is one which largely depends upon the developments in light of the Memorandum signed by the Georgian Ministry of Energy and the Russian company Inter-RAO UES in late December 2008. The text of the Memorandum has been declared a commercial secret – only some clauses have been disclosed to Georgian parliamentarians on their demand – with several development scenarios envisaged there from until it is made public or agreements resulting from the Memorandum signed.

3. It is very important that the EU supports projects to prepare and publish up-to-date completely de-ideologised textbooks in his-

tory geography, which would be distributed Georgian schools in the Gali District of Abkhazia, as a means of promoting dialogue, reconciliation post-conflict cooperation between the communities on both sides of the conflict. This would be a serious step towards overcoming the present state of distrust between the Georgian and Abkhaz communities and facilitate the ground for successful confidence-building programmes in the near future.

### **Recommendations to the Euro-Union:**


Within the current situation, the active engagement of the European Union is deemed most promising for conflict resolution in terms of:

- Stimulating the start of a dialogue and within the negotiation process between all sides to the conflict;
- Promoting the elaboration of c approaches for the implementation of economic and social projects;
- Promoting the establishment of legal foundations for the system of a preferential regime (tax free or a favourable tax regime) for the production and circulation of economically important (agricultural) local products and the free and secure movement of goods, services and persons across the conflict divide;
- Promoting the creation of necessary conditions for the establishment of the International Investment and Rehabilitation Funds under the aegis of the European Union;
- Elaborating the appropriate agreements between all sides to conflict stemming out of the agreed principles of cooperation and basic proposals;
- Monitoring the implementation of these agreements.

Considering the volatile situation on the spot and the existing risks, threats and opportunities, the Georgian experts analysed the problems and offered the European Union concrete approaches to implement in case of materialisation of different scenarios of development in the conflict area.

- According to the Georgian experts, it is essential that the EU and the UN coordinate their activities aimed at ensuring security in the conflict area, the protection of its population and combating crime;
- In case that the UN cannot continue its operation in the conflict area, under necessary conditions, the EU might take over the role as of a mediator to promote a non-violent resolution of the conflict;
- The experts recommend to promote a rapprochement between the local law-enforcement and administrative structures and the non-governmental organisations of Georgia and the European Union regarding the issues of security which would meet the EU strategic tasks of its European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership initiative;
- It is important to increase of the role of the European Union in the professional training of Georgian police, and, as conditions allow, establishing of the democratic control over the police forces upon both sides of the conflict divide.

2010



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## CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA-GEORGIA RELATIONS

### The Orwellian Power Phenomenon in 21<sup>st</sup> century

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

George Orwell, "1984".

At first sight, the relations between Russia and Georgia look like a multi-layer geopolitical paradox. (1) Georgia has former autonomies alienated as a result of the armed conflicts, necessary yet insufficient condition of whose return is Russia's active promotion of this cause. In full awareness of that, antagonism is still purposefully developed in Georgia against Russia. (2) Russia, in its turn, sees Georgia as its own alienated territory, which she has fed for centuries and who now turned her down after the fall of

USSR. Russia is puzzled why should anti-Russian sentiment be wide spread in Georgia and thinks it normal that she promoted secessionism in Georgian autonomies, contrary to its broker status and acknowledgment of the territorial integrity of Georgia. (3) With no external leverage in view to enforce Russia's collaboration in Abkhazia and South Ossetia issues, Georgia still insists on seeking such leverage and appeals to the West to ensure it. (4) Stating that the war cannot be over while occupation lasts, Georgia's leaders reject the possibility of dialogue and negotiations with Russia, "until the last occupier soldier leaves the Georgian territory". (5) Announcing as a state strategy "Cooperation through Engagement" with the seceded regions, Georgian leaders freeze contacts with the de facto authorities. (6) The official Georgian propaganda tries to create a picture of Russia soon falling apart as a result of erosion in North Caucasus, although there are no indications to that. (7) Declaring Russia as a number one external threat for Georgia, a number of Georgia's strategic (energy and economy) assets are transferred to Russian state-controlled companies, and this continues well after the August 2008 war. (8) Speaking about stability and security in the Caucasus region, Russia is at the same time building her military presence through bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia who she recognized unilaterally as independent states, while refusing to allow to these territories the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) creation of which in August 2008 she had endorsed. (9) The military-strategic gambling with "restoring the constitutional order" in Tskhinvali had cost inestimable losses to Georgia, yet the demand to bring to book the gamblers did not have any development in Georgia. (10) The international community blamed Russia for a so-called "disproportionate reaction" to Saakashvili's actions in Tskhinvali – in fact a full-fledged aggression against a sovereign state – but no one ever raised a question of responsibility of the Russian leaders. And so on, and so forth...

To untangle this mass of oddities and contradictions, uncover its logic (not always normal and sane) and comprehend the nature of this pseudo-paradox, it is necessary to trace the genesis of the par-



ties' interrelations, the impact of the leaders' personalities – seen in the mirror of the mentality of respective communities – and analyze the ratio between the subjective and objective factors, which, of course, exceeds the scope of one article. Behind what looks like playing with fire and instability, it is however possible to see the contours of underlying unstable power equilibrium.

### **THE SOURCES OF RUSSIA-GEORGIA STANDOFF**

Through the entire post-Soviet period Russia was seen in Georgia as a party interested in weakening the reemerging Georgian statehood and turning the small South-Caucasus country into a speechless promoter of the Russian policies in the region. Since the beginning of 1990s Russia was widely seen as establishing hegemonic stability in the post-Soviet space through the tools of reunification such as CIS. Only the Baltic states were seen as irreversibly fallen out and lost for Moscow at that time. For the rest of the former Soviet republics/states the prospect of creation of Moscow-dominated confederation of legally sovereign states with different levels of affiliation to the center was not assessed as improbable. Reaching respective agreements with Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan was deemed as having crucial importance in order to implement the goal of reunification, while newly independent states such as Georgia were also an object of interest for NATO. The main instrument of enforcement to motivate Georgia to reunification – an Orwellian doublethink encrusted in it – was seen in ethno-political conflicts involving Georgian autonomies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and raging since the times the fall of the Soviet system has started. Practically all Georgians have been convinced that Russia played an active role in instigating those conflicts.

At the end of 1980s Zviad Gamsakhurdia's "Round Table" party declared USSR a "modernized Russian empire" that Georgia had to liberate from to ensure the revival of its statehood and resolution of the disputes with Abkhaz and Ossets. It was immediately clear however that the ethno-nationalist slogans of Gamsakhurdia's

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

In spite of all, both during the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992-1993 and well after its tragic outcome Russia was seen in Georgia as an actual holder of the keys to the conflict, with whom it is crucial to maintain stable relations. That was why Shevardnadze's government reconciled with the appointment of three power ministers – the interior, state security and defense – by Moscow, until the situation changed dramatically after the autumn of 1995 terrorist attack on the President. The conspiracy led to then Minister of the State Security Igor Giorgadze. In spite of the entire complexity and controversy of Russia's image in Georgia and the ensuing distrust, Russia was not unanimously seen as an enemy up to the summer of 2004, a turning point in Georgia-Russia relations, which can be proven by the positive public reaction to the mission of Igor Ivanov to Tbilisi on November 23, 2003 (the day Shevardnadze resigned and the "Rose Revolution" won) and to Batumi on May 6, 2004 (Aslan Abashidze's flight to Moscow and the victory of Ajaran stage of the "Rose Revolution"). Such a reaction in regard to Russia would be

hardly imaginable in all following years, earlier than or after August of 2008. Let us thus try to understand what happened in between.

### **FACTORS OF “POST-ROSY” DEVELOPMENT OF EVENTS AND THE ROLE OF THE LEADERS**

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

Russia has at least twice in the period before summer of 2004 demonstrated its support of the developments in Georgia: final resignation of Shevardnadze's on November 23, 2003 and the retreat to Moscow of Aslan Abashidze on May 6, 2004, both developments being associated at that time with the mission of Igor Ivanov who in general was positively perceived in Georgia, not in the least because of his Georgian family ties. Only later considerations appeared that Russia was trying to post factum ascribe to its influence the development of events that would take place anyway and to demonstrate its constructive role. And the whole situation, when finalization of the political processes in Georgia required a Russian "seal" on it was looked at with growing irritation by the young reformers. It seemed that the Moor hath done his duty, let him go. A sharp turn in Georgia-Russia relations acquired the form that shocked many.

2010

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

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

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

One of the observed inconsistencies in the leaders' behavior was that they made public mockery and insulting statements towards those, with whom they were supposed to solve important issues at the negotiation table. The discussion of this phenomenon in the press and by public was often reduced to the attempts to identify who started first and who smacked whom, whereas more important issues (how this or that behavior influences the chances of achieving agreement and facilitates the solution of interstate problems) were practically ignored. The Russian and Georgian press and internet editions ecstatically discussed the indirect verbal duels between Putin and Saakashvili. Georgian TV created satirical sketches around the theme "Kokoity fandarast", regularly broadcast the records of anti-Georgian speeches in Russian Duma, as well as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's declarations full of threats and hatred.

The main bogey in anti-Georgian propaganda in Russia was Georgia's striving to join NATO, which was interpreted by Moscow as Georgia's new government's attempt to gain the trust of "western patrons" through the creation of tension zones and NATO's military bases at Russia's southern borders. For Georgia, which was weakened by the conflicts and the syndrome of one's own vulnerability, integration into the European community (in regard to which the national consensus has always existed) was directly linked with joining the system of collective security, part of which Europe was, i.e. NATO. That is why the unifying term "Euro-Atlantic integration"

emerged in the Georgian foreign policy discourse. Moreover, Georgia saw that the Baltic and Eastern European states joined the EC in the same way. Russia's anti-NATO policy could impede Georgia's Euro-integration, especially in the light of Georgians' grown mistrust in CIS as a mechanism able to ensure the country's security and facilitate conflict resolution. The preference of the policy of neutrality for the solution of Russian issue was openly considered only in a few groups of Georgian society and the Labor Party. Although the results of the NATO Bucharest summit in March 2008 were negative for Georgia (the summit was supposed to offer Georgia MAP – a membership action plan considered to be the final step before receiving NATO membership), the excitement around the Summit had stimulated Russian authorities to conduct pro-active actions in the conflict zone. This showed that Russia's position, also in relation to NATO, acquired the character of ultimatum. The conditions for a radical solution of the problem that emerged in summer 2008 were ensured as a result of Saakashvili's Tskhinvali operation and the subsequent punitive operation carried out by the Russian troops, known as the August War.

2010

### **THE POST-AUGUST STAGE IN RUSSIA-GEORGIA RELATIONS**

The lessons taught by history clearly show that regional wars are one of the most powerful factors of strengthening the government's position within the country (the country can be ruled by harsher methods and the people will still be united around the leaders), which, in its turn, helps strengthen the government's position also outside the country (people's support to the leaders weakens the attempts to make adjustments to the authorities' external policies). Since the beginning of his presidency, Putin had been asserting himself as leader through the Chechen wars and the blown up residential blocks in Moscow. From the beginning of his presidency, Bush Jr. turned out to be the kind of leader who had to accept the challenge of the September 11 terrorist acts and announce a global "war on terror", with the Iraq war as its main component. Neither socio-economic, nor any other indicators (no matter how alarming

they looked) could impede these leaders' re-election, so strong was their power due to the already achieved mobilization against the external threat. As for the situation in Georgia, Saakashvili was more vulnerable in this respect. The wave of disappointment after the "Rose Revolution", crackdown on the participants of mass protest actions on November 7, 2007, and the followed snap presidential elections, which Saakashvili won with insignificant advantage over his not so strong opponent, did not bring confidence about the stability of domestic political situation.

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

the “gas wars”. Correspondingly, Georgia’s place in the inventory of means of mutual influence has shifted to periphery.

When Vladimir Putin declared in autumn 2008 that he would not talk to Mikheil Saakashvili (and added something else regarding what he was going to do to him), he locked Russia-Georgia relations within the limits of a certain configuration which reflected the post-August realities and was supposed to establish a new status quo in the simplest and painless way, instead of channeling all that into lengthy negotiations and discussions, maybe even with someone else’s mediation. The Russian leaders definitely needed some time to stabilize the situation (especially their international image) after the August crisis. The potential reaction of the Georgian side to Putin’s and Medvedev’s declarations was accurately predicted. The Georgian authorities also needed some stabilization period, so the scheme also worked to their advantage. Here, the so-called “good chemistry” (Johan Galtung’s term) again manifested itself, as the hostile rhetoric and demonstrative confrontation perfectly blend with the synchronous actions of the leaders in power trying to guarantee rear area for each other as well as for themselves.

The situation is the same at present, but the conditions and environment are totally different from those of post-August times. The international community, as well as the community of experts voice serious concerns regarding the prolonged silence of both parties. The international community is concerned about the absence of dialogue, which hinders the activity of international and interstate structures in many areas. This results in the increased risk of armed provocations and a sharp complication of the situation in the region, including the difficulties related to the implementation of large-scale international energy projects. Neither Abkhazia nor Ossetia can build their future only on the power of Russian military bases, vigilance of the border regime and maintenance of the bogey of external threat from the Georgian state. Now, even the authorities of the Russian Federation have to make gestures inviting to the dialogue, so that they do not look like the initiators of crisis and the generators of deadlocks in the world’s eyes. The only invariant in



this picture is the line followed by the Georgian government, which constantly demands more activity from the international community to make Russia accountable for its past deeds and denies the possibility of “leading any negotiations with the aggressor” as long as the “occupation of Georgian territories” is going on. Most Georgian oppositional parties are hesitant to push dialogue because of the fear of marginalization, labeling and accusation of being unpatriotic.

An interesting conclusion can be drawn from the above. In spite of being a small country, Georgia generates the phenomenon of power that follows the pattern of big countries. The attributes of its governance system are even similar to those of superpowers. Gamsakhurdia’s rule was the first example of what has been said above, but his style of governance did not and could not last long. Shevardnadze was a typical ruler of a small and poor developing country. On the whole, his ambitions corresponded to the resources actually accessible for the country, and sometimes even fell behind them. Finally, Saakashvili demonstrates the traits typical not only of an authoritarian leader, but also of a leader of a huge virtual power, the potential and resources of which are presented in an exaggerated form compared to reality. In spite of this, Saakashvili’s team has found the right balance between the external and internal stabilizing factors, which makes it possible to minimize the criticism from the West (which was much louder in the past) regarding the unhealthy election system, lack of freedom in the mass media and the judiciary system and the weakness of democratic institutions. While skillfully applying PR technologies and media effects, the President’s team creates an impression of economic dynamism and its own increasing popularity within the inner political space. As for the President, he still retains in the West the image of a bit eccentric yet progressive reformer, the type of reformer who is struggling, together with his team, with the difficult heritage of the post-Soviet corrupt community deprived of privileges and incomes, as well as a pro-Russian Fifth Column represented by the bankrupt opposition and the retarded *intelligentsia* unhappy with the reforms. The most difficult part of spin-doctoring is shaping, reinterpreting and

amplifying any signals that are able to at least smoothen (if not to remove) in people's consciousness the feeling of insolubility of territorial problems, as well as of the problems related to the guarantees of safe and democratic development. But all this has been also manageable, so far.

### **THE STRATEGY OF ALIENATION**

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

Demonstrative deportation from Georgia of four Russian military servants under the accusation of espionage at the end of 2006 was bound to entail a furious reaction in Russia. There is a well substantiated opinion that this was done intentionally, to evoke exactly this kind of reaction. The policy of alienation from Russia, as a major direction in the state strategy, was considered by the Georgian leadership already in that period. The objective was to ensure mutual alienation between the countries. While it was relatively easy to intensify anti-Russian attitudes through propaganda and permanent demonstration of negative experience by the mass media within the small country, the accomplishment of the same task seemed to be a real problem in the super power which was not under your control. However, an unexpected and daring move, leading to a real breakthrough in this direction, would be public humiliation and derision of representatives of that part of Russian establishment who did not belong to the high echelon (using the same approach in relation to the latter could prove ineffective), and was, at the same time, respected by large segments of the Russian public. The officer corps and peacekeeping forces belonged to that very category. It did not take Russia long to react in the expected and controllable way: a hysteric anti-Georgian campaign was launched and a huge number of Georgian economic migrants residing in Russia were deported in an extremely humiliating manner: they were flown back to Georgia

on board Russian cargo aircrafts not suitable for the transportation of people, where it was impossible to sit or hold the grab-handle, not to mention the absence of necessary passenger safety means. A wave of humiliating checking and oppression of all the people of Georgian nationality passed over Russia. It even involved the school-children and certainly encouraged the Russian skinheads' future "heroic" actions towards the third world representatives.

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

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

stage, immediately expresses his protest against the use of force by the Russian military and declares the Commander of Peacekeeping Forces General Chaban *persona non grata*. The cameras are registering the bleeding wounds of Georgian policeman, and the whole incident turns into a top TV news for the following days.

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

After the isolation is achieved and antagonism is established in people's minds, it becomes easier to control the situation. When, at the beginning of 2010, the Moscow experts, that were close to Russia's ruling circles, decided to make a proactive step and arrived at the Tbilisi airport without preliminary consultations, they were not let into the country. The explanation was that two persons in the group were connected to the Russian secret service. In fact, another obstacle to prevent the dialogue was created by this action. If they had let the Russian experts in, irrespective of the character

of the meetings and discussions, the Georgian mass media would have interviewed the meeting participants, and the Russian-Georgian discourse might get a chance to perk up. However, that kind of development could not be allowed.

The strategic aim seemed to have been achieved, any contacts were tabooed, and the public was held in the state of prescribed anxious expectation of unpredictable future. However, “someone” was still concerned and wanted to make sure that the achieved alienation level was really irreversible. The Imedi TV main news program “the Chronicle” shown at 8 p.m. of March 13, 2010 served just this purpose of testing the status of mass consciousness and, at the same time, shaking it up 10. The simulated Chronicle reported, in the form of real-time sensational news, about Russia’s new invasion of Georgia, escape of the authorities and the change of government in Tbilisi (thus, “the Chronicle” was “completing” the events that Russians were not able to complete in August 2008). It also reiterated the names of the opposition leaders brought to power that were rendered to be Moscow’s appointees. It was only later announced that all that was simulation and apologies were made. But people were psychologically traumatized; some had heart attacks (one person even died). Georgian public had a feeling of protest and indignation, but the agitation shortly subsided without any consequences for the organizers of the program.

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

Imedi were happy to declare emphatically that Moscow was too shocked to have any kind of celebration that day.

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

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

by many as a preventive remedy (always useful when you apply the right dose) not to let the future leaders of Georgia play dangerous games with orientation changes. The essence of the problem, however, is that the dose of this “remedy” has already exceeded any conceivable amount and might easily become lethal.

### **INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION**

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

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

At present, the situation looks as follows: The balance around the distribution of roles has become more or less stable on the international level. From the point of view of external observer, the situation in Georgia can be assessed as stable, despite the presence

of Russian troops and military equipment in 40 miles from Tbilisi. The freezing of Georgia-Russia relations is tolerable in terms of international stability and some unexpected aggravations are not likely to take place. The opposition in Russia and Georgia is weak and controllable, as well as the mass media, and the activity level of civil society groups is much lower than before. Sporadic attempts of radical oppositional forces to “revitalize” the country’s political life do not bring any tangible changes. It is expected, anyway, that the situation will be more lively and even more complex in both countries in a couple of years, with the approaching parliamentary and presidential elections. So, Europe can take its time and deal with the priority issues until then.

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

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



# Georgia's Security Dilemma in the Light of Post-August Realities



# 2010

Georgia, 2009

Post-War Challenges & Perspectives

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, "Georgia, 2009, Post-War Challenges & Perspectives", Published by Independent Experts' Club, Tbilisi, 2010.

## GEORGIA'S SECURITY DILEMMA IN THE LIGHT OF POST-AUGUST REALITIES

Georgia is in a difficult position: the country has recently been through a most devastating and humiliating invasion after more or less quiet 15 years of development; the unsettled for almost two decades ethnoterritorial disputes were assertively "resolved" by Russia after the five-day war in August 2008; diplomatic relations of Georgia with Russia have been terminated thereafter; the level of confrontation between the two neighboring states remains high; and the internal political situation in Georgia is of growing concern both domestically and internationally. Under these circumstances, the political moves from Georgia's leadership might go in the direction of finding rational intermediate approaches and facilitating more secured future positions for the country through building confidence with both strategic allies and strategic rivals, along with stabilizing the internal political and human security situation, which could be achieved by building national unity through just, transparent and accountable policies and demonstration of openness to dialogue over all major issues. Yet what we see in reality is dramat-

ically different, there is little constructiveness in the ruling team's approaches and moves, and mostly out of subjective rather than objective reasons. On the whole, the internal situation has further aggravated since the August war, and it is worthwhile to study both domestic and external dimensions of it to be able to foresee what may or may not happen in near future.

### **POST-AUGUST CHALLENGES AND THREATS REMAIN UNADDRESSED**

On August 26, 2008 the President of Russia has signed a decree which endorsed the decision of State Duma of the Russian Federation to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. This act was done unilaterally, neither upon consultation with international organizations, nor with Georgia, a country part of whose territory the disputed regions have constituted, and a signatory together with Russian Federation to the agreements laid in early 1990s and regulating the relations regarding the conflict zones in Georgia. The recognition was followed by bilateral agreements between the two sides – including the agreements about the cooperation in military sphere – as independent signatories.

With the exception of three countries – Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru – there is no further external support for Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. Despite persistent efforts of Moscow, Belarus has so far refused to consider the recognition issue on its parliamentary agenda.

The international community has negatively assessed the Russian decisions, although was overcautious in judging Russia's actions in the lands qualified by Georgia as occupied territories<sup>1</sup>, ostensibly, in expectation of the report of EU-sponsored Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (also known as the Tagliavini Commission) to be made public. According to the

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<sup>1</sup> UN confirmed in 2009 SC Resolution the unconditional right of both first and second (post-August) waves of IDPs to return to their homes; the PACE resolution 1683 of 2009 affirmed the European position with regard to the post-war realities.

conclusions of the Commission published in the fall of 2009, the recognition was done contrary to the principles and norms of international law<sup>1</sup>. Yet Russian leaders have since then only reaffirmed that their decision about the recognition (as well as the subsequent agreements and documents) is “irrevocable”. **THE STARTING POINT FOR THE RUSSIAN SELF-JUSTIFYING PICTURE HAS BEEN SAAKASHVILI’S WIDELY TELEVISED** statement on the evening of August 7, 2008 about Georgian military units having the Ossetian capital Tskhinvali under their control, and preparing to soon take under control the whole territory of the secessionist region, thus bringing an end to the nearly two decade-long dispute. The Russian mass media was in the same time spreading appalling news about Georgian artillery shelling civilian-populated districts of Tskhinvali, which was qualified by Russia as genocide, not just a forceful attempt to occupy the city, but to get even with “separatist rebels” and to exterminate the Ossetians entirely (!). Neither the Tagliavini Commission, nor other competent sources have confirmed the genocide allegations, but have on the other hand confirmed the instigating role of Saakashvili’s Tskhinvali operation in what brought the catastrophic effect of Russian military invasion in the vast territories of a sovereign state, civilian casualties and the destroyed infrastructure<sup>2</sup>. No wonder that since August 8 the Russian invasion in Georgia was qualified worldwide – including the statements made during and after the August war by George W. Bush and Condo-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Volume I, September 2009, pp. 10-33.

<sup>2</sup> It should be mentioned that there has been a wide and positive resonance in Georgia with regard to Andrei Illarionov’s studies of the Russian-Georgian war. It really contains vast evidence that Russians prepared for war long before August, built fortifications in and the quasi-state relations with Abkhazia, and provoked the Georgian side in a number of ways. Yet Illarionov’s study completely ignores any fact of instigation of the confrontation from the Georgian side (e.g. how can you reliably describe the summer 2004 aggravation in South Ossetia without even mentioning the role of then Minister of Defense Irakli Okruashvili, or touching upon the Georgian military attack on Tskhinvali on August 7?). Hence, Illarionov’s studies better be dubbed as evidence of the Russian role in the developments in Georgia since the ‘Rose Revolution’, for they are very much one-sided and do not really present a full or objective picture, as they claim to.

leezza Rice – as “Russia’s disproportionate reaction” (obviously, to Saakashvili’s action), and not an “unprovoked aggression” it would undoubtedly be called in another case.

Russian leaders are always trying to find legal justification to what they are doing, partly from adapted international law principles, but mostly from the practices and rules of game of the bigpower realpolitik. In a given case, Russian actions against Georgia have allegedly been caused by responsibility to protect their so-called “citizens” in South Ossetia (an unanimously acknowledged as part of Georgia at that time), actually – an artificial Russian diaspora created through distributing Russian passports to later have a basis for interference. Yet there are serious obstacles on the way of Russia’s reference to international law to justify its actions. The UN General Assembly Output Document of 2005 defines responsibility to protect only inside the borders of a state. It does not in any way imply justifications for interference in another state’s affairs or territory, as this happened in August of 2008<sup>1</sup>.

The situation has changed significantly since the immediate post-August developments of 2008. The Russian leadership is taking efforts to make everyone adapt to the “new realities”. According to their approach, there are no more internal ethno-political conflicts in Georgia: this issue has allegedly expired with the external recognition of the two self-proclaimed states. The international missions stationed in Georgia with the mandate of monitoring ceasefire and observing the situation on the ground (the security zones) needed to be reconsidered accordingly. There is, according to the Russian perspective, no need to monitor security inside the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as Russians are doing it anyway, and, as long as the Russian version is concerned, there is no threat to the Georgian side from the “former disputed territories”. On the other hand, Georgia protests to one-sided international missions on its

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<sup>1</sup> See the UN General Assembly Output Document of 2005, the materials of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and clarifications made by the initiator of R2P Dr. Gareth Evans, then Chair of the International Crisis Group (ICG).

territory, as this would confirm the Russian version of the actual security threat.

Implementation of the Sarkozy-Medvedev six-point agreement has stumbled exactly on the points of withdrawal of the sides' military to the positions of August 6, 2008 (which the Russian leadership did not even think to fulfill), and the mandate of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to include the operation within the conflict affected areas.

It turned out that locking in the post-August status quo was in the interests of power-holders on both sides. It is significant that in the Georgian official perspective, an interpretation of the post-August reality has developed that has certain parallels with Russian. Risky as this may be, it has been said that after August we no more have conflict zones on the Georgian territory, nor the internal political conflicts, but only the occupied territories<sup>1</sup>.

As we will see in the further text, this has partly been caused by the need to somehow rule out the dialogue issue, but also to comply to the longstanding urge in the post-Soviet Georgian political thinking to narrow down the structure of conflict from multi-lateral (multi-party) to just Georgian Russian, and concentrate the entire "other" side within the "Russia" identity.

On the official agenda, restoration of the territorial integrity still occupies a high place, but has become more of a ritual than a goal, for everyone realizes that fundamental changes took place since August 2008. The most significant negative changes that took place since the end of five-day war to the present day include withdrawal of the OSCE Mission in Georgia after persistent pressure on international community from the Russian leadership, as well as termination of the operation of UNOMIG (the UN Observer Mission in Georgia). The conflict affected areas in Georgia have effectively stayed without any international monitoring capacities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Law on Occupied Territories of Georgia adopted by the Georgian Parliament soon after the war ended came under criticism of the Venice Commission for containing counter-productive points, and will probably be amended.

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE SIDES ABOUT EACH OTHER

Moscow is trying to keep up the image of Georgia as a rogue state that violates agreements, is constantly up to destructive forceful actions towards its seceded regions, supports terrorism in North Caucasus and elsewhere, and thus represents a threat to international stability and requires supervision from Russia as a more developed and responsible power. Through the government-controlled media outlets and diplomatic leverage Moscow tries to persuade the international community not to support Georgia politically or economically, as any international aid would be misused by Georgia to rebuild its military and try again to regain by force its lost territories. At the political level, diplomatic relations between the two countries remain broken and both Medvedev and Putin have confirmed that no negotiations with Georgia are possible while President Saakashvili is in power.

Expressed attitudes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia consider that the Georgian society is not friendly towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia and, instead of repenting its own role in instigation of the ethnic wars, blames Russia for supporting separatism. Other than the very general proposition of "high level" autonomy for the seceded regions, the idea of the federalist principle of territorial arrangement and decentralization of power has never gained popular support in Georgia, which for the Abkhaz and Ossets renders any proposals of reunification coming from Georgia as unserious and mischievous. They deem that Georgia is not interested in restoring human and cultural relationships with Abkhazian and South-Ossetian societies, but is only interested in regaining the lost territories by whatever means. In Abkhazia and South Ossetia there is no attempt to distinguish between regimes, civil societies, populations and historical stages: Georgia is one collective indistinguishable Enemy.

It is a wide-spread story in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that Georgia nurtured plans to strike Abkhazia by mid 2008, and would do it, but at the last "minute" changed the plan and hit Tskhinvali. Or alternately, the "Abkhazia operation" might have been a cover-up

for the “Ossetia operation” which allegedly seemed more feasible to the Georgian leadership because of the natural landscape and border accessibility. At the same time, according to sources, the Abkhaz leadership – unlike the South Osset one – resisted the option of participating in August in the Russian military operation outside the disputed territories and preferred not to open “the second front” in Kodori.

The Abkhaz aspirations to build ties with Europe overtly refer to promoting economy and tourism, and tacitly aim to balance to some extent the everincreasing Russian domination in Abkhazia, yet in no way would that mean at this stage a more tolerant attitude to building a closer interaction with Georgia. The level of alienation remains very high and growing, and the level of trust at an all-time low.

#### **INDICATIONS AND COUNTER-INDICATIONS FOR DIALOGUE**

The deadlock that exists cannot be explained away as a result of an entirely external third-party intervention. The vicious circle created by the Georgian officialdom to justify their inaction with regard to the post-August status quo may be summarized as follows (as these arguments had been reiterated by the Georgian president and his closest allies many times and in many forms): “We are told we should talk to our direct counterparts – separatist leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

OK, we would speak to the separatists, but they say only what is prescribed by their bosses in Moscow. Understanding this total dependence, we conclude it makes no sense to talk to the de facto authorities. OK, we would be ready to speak to their bosses in Moscow, as we understand they possess the passkey. But the leaders in Moscow refuse to talk to us, so they are the ones who block the passage, not us”. Eventually, the only way to achieve a breakthrough is seen in letting those forces mobilize internationally who are strong and motivated enough to interfere and make a change.

The most superficial glance shows the flaws of this chain of arguments, effectively blocking the way to transform internally to respond to new challenges, shifting the responsibility onto international actors (unspecified) and putting finally everyone in expectation of Godot. Government-controlled media channels are scanning oceans of information to support any evidence that Russian military is getting more disorganized, turmoil is developing in Northern Caucasus, energy export prices are rising, or use as mantras the quotations by U.S. or NATO high officials' about Georgia's inevitable NATO membership – anything is used that would presumably raise hopes in spectators that Russia may soon dissolve or Georgia may get a stronger support, but a virtual reality is created at the same time which confirms that, on a deeper level and in a longer term, the vicious circle is really vicious and incurable.

2010

### **SITUATION WITH GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ AND GEORGIAN-OSSET RELATIONS**

Georgia's state policy is not to recognize the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moreover, any communication channel with them has been terminated, and in emergency situation, like the recent case of Georgian adolescents detained in the fall of 2009 in Tskhinvali, international organizations have to initiate their involvement to mediate<sup>1</sup>. The once active Joint Control Commission (JCC) is abolished since 2007 and the only remaining format where the sides are able to meet and discuss issues is the Geneva format under the aegis of EU, which has become increasingly scarce and ineffective. (Anti-incident mechanism agreed on in Geneva was the only positive outcome so far of the post-war multilateral negotiation achieved in the Geneva format). Georgian officials' clarification of their position of non-communication with de facto authorities gets down to the arguments that (a) those are the marionette regimes

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<sup>1</sup> It was mostly due to persistent efforts of Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe Commissioner on Human Rights that the Georgian adolescents were finally released from the Tskhinvali detention in December 2009.



unable to make decisions or provide policies other than dictated from Moscow, so it makes no sense to even talk to them, and (b) Moscow refuses to communicate with Georgia's current leaders, so the situation on the spot cannot be managed through communication with Moscow. The only remaining leverage is considered to be in hands of international community, the passiveness of which is often rebuked in Tbilisi. According to anticipations in Tbilisi, the actual threat coming from Russia's energy domination ambitions should have caused a more consolidated deterring reaction from Europe. Yet this version has lost its plausibility since the period following Russia's cut-off of European gas supply in winter of 2008 and the Russia-Ukraine "gas war" has been replaced with new hopes for "management through cooperation" linked for Europe with President Obama's policy of reset towards Russia.

What are the approaches to explore? First and foremost, it is obvious that rapprochement of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali with Tbilisi cannot happen in the nearest future, no matter how politics or leaders may change in Moscow and Tbilisi. It is obvious that mutually alienated Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Osset relations need an injection of continuous track two – and, wherever possible, track-one-and-a-half – efforts that would effect larger and more influential groups on both sides and create between them a working communication channel. Since Temuri Yakobashvili became State Minister on Reintegration (formerly referred to as Ministry for Conflict Resolution), interaction of his office with civil society actors in Georgia involved in the dialogue efforts activated. International resonance to the internal situation in Georgia prompted the government since fall of 2009 to demonstrate new constructive approaches and openness to dialogue. The official document called "State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement through Cooperation" has been developed towards the end of 2009 upon consultation with independent experts and civil society representatives where for the first time the necessity of track-two dialogue with the secessionist societies is stressed and the role of civil society is

acknowledged. With the strategy of “engagement through cooperation” interaction with de facto authorities is also deemed possible.

It has yet to be seen whether the practice will be in accordance with the adopted strategy document. Georgian NGOs and CSOs who initiated and conducted informal group meetings between the sides are persisting in their efforts to maintain dialogue/communication channels against all odds<sup>1</sup>.

### **IMPASSES AND DEADLOCKS AS TOOLS OF POLICY-MAKING**

The widely known thesis of the Georgian Government is “The war is not finished until the occupation of our territories continues”. How long can war last in such a case, especially if peaceful negotiations are declared impossible?

There is one “useful” thing about impasses and deadlocks that block the conflict resolution process, especially if they are linked with threats attributed to an external third-party’s activity: a decision maker may be painlessly relieved of his/her responsibility to achieve the progress in finding constructive solutions, is allowed to shift this task to the next generation in political power, and stay for a while safe of accusations in inefficiency. So there appears a temptation to turn a deadlock into a dynamo machine, portraying the image of the external threat as permanent, overwhelming and unmanageable, and transform the internal political reality into a permanent semi-martial emergency situation accordingly. This is the case we are witnessing at present in Georgia.

Georgian leadership and its ideologists stick to the story of “no one would do better than us anyway” and “wait a bit, and changes will happen”. Otherwise the share of responsibility for the lost war and lost chances to restore the country’s integrity gets more salient and chances to be reelected slimmer. It is not a question of Georgia not being able to develop or use some instruments or

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Georgian and Abkhaz Perspectives on Human Security and Development in Conflict-Affected Areas (A Policy Research Initiative), Brussels and Madrid: CITpax, 2009.

capacities. It is non-existence of any instruments or capacities that would make the task feasible without Russia's participation. That is how the situation is evaluated in the international community, with the exception of those circles abroad who are trying to maintain Georgia's active anti-Russian stance at any cost and against all objective evidence of threats and risks this incur not only for Georgia, but also for a larger region's security.

The dimensions of the current impasse include:

- Georgian leadership portrays itself as possessing leverage to pursue a tough line towards Russia, while there is no favorable environment or active external support for that;
- Russia is portrayed in Georgia as a party with whom it is impossible to negotiate, raising Russia's image up to an irrational point;
- No policies or actions have been offered capable of reducing the level of alienation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia towards Georgia;
- No resources or opportunities are in view to activate international community to the extent of pressuring Russia towards change of its decision on recognition.

### **PERSPECTIVES OF STARTING THE DIALOGUE WITH RUSSIA**

Both in Moscow and Tbilisi the picture is not uniform. According to Russian sources, there are two groups in Moscow circled around the following positions: the first is inclined to let things continue as they are – no official contacts or even negotiations while Saakashvili stays in power, continuation of information war, etc.; the other, on the contrary, is trying to substantiate the necessity to restart the relation-building process without preconditions, provided that a similar intention manifests on the Georgian side. The picture on the Georgian side is even less articulate: the overall irrational attitude (see above) dominating the Georgian public life prevents any group of influence from openly advocating a pro-dialogue turn in the policies.

Perceptions of Saakashvili's public statements differ seriously from those of Shevardnadze while he was still a president "in good standing": the latter read as thought-out directives revealing a balancing denominator to follow, while Saakashvili's more often express his emotional mood and PR effect than a consolidated policy line. So, a Georgian spectator got used in the recent years to not looking at his statements as necessarily part of the "team's" political agenda.

Yet psychologically one cannot help trying to read in the first person's words more than lies on the surface, reaching into what's the rulers are up to and what they may keep up their sleeve. And when the president says from the parliament rostrum that "No dialogue will start until the last occupant soldier leaves our soil", it reads like something on which the core team is agreed about, leaving a spooky impression on everyone else. The main question skipped is: how can a deoccupation process ever start – let alone be successful – if negotiations do not precede it? And as soon as no questions or objections register in a controlled media space, this is duly interpreted by the same media as a public support.

Putin and Medvedev have repeatedly stressed after the August war that they would not speak to the Georgian leadership while Saakashvili is in power. That was a kind of statement that intended to freeze the post-August status quo, block the prospect of negotiations and aimed to encourage internal forces to seek replacement of Saakashvili in order to open the path for restoring the relations with a formidably powerful northern neighbor. Yet in Georgia this had, however temporarily, created an opposite effect, prompting people to consolidate around existing national symbols, including the president, and invigorating the already irrationally negative image of Russia as a perennial oppressor. Contrary to Moscow's calculations, Saakashvili's rating surged in the period immediately following the August war. Even now, most of the opposition parties deem necessary to follow suit and avoid possible accusations in non-patriotic behavior. Instead of seeking alternative channels to melt the ice, even through activity of opposition leaders, the actual situation in

Georgia has been such that any contacts with Moscow and with separatist authorities are frowned upon and make their participants vulnerable to accusations in treachery and subversive behavior.

Keeping the issue of Russia-Georgia relations in the sphere of irrational helps avoid chains of thought that would inevitably invade people's minds and reveal the simple truth: all the processes that might lead to discussing the issues, building trust, developing relations and creating a chance of restoration of integrity in future are sacrificed to the political well-being of current leaders who happen not to get together well.

by George Khutsishvili

### *Fading or Degenerating "Revolutions"?*

We all know where we came from. We differ in determining where we are going. And this increasingly becomes the feeling of not only post-totalitarian, but also of comfortable and stable Western societies. The current economic crisis has added some value, but there are deeper – and earlier manifested – reasons for doubting the unquestionably

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their closest allies looked not just as national leaders that showed off as democracy beacons, but actually Western Messiahs to the backward East with an ultimate tacit target to impose democratisation on Russia. Their message to own societies read: you may

## GEORGIA'S TRANSITION DILEMMA

### **FADING OR DEGENERATING "REVOLUTIONS"?**

There was time, however short on a historic scale, when Saakashvili and Yuschenko with their closest allies looked not just as national leaders that showed off as democracy beacons, but actually Western Messiahs to the backward East with an ultimate tacit target to impose democratisation on Russia. Their message to own societies read: you may doubt or lag behind, but we will not relent as we know we are doing a right job for your better future. If we compare that time to the present moment (end of February 2009), we see what a dramatic deterioration and discreditation has the idea of "colour revolutions" had. Instead of open societies with increasing market- and law-based systems, we see authoritarian "hybrid mutant" power conglomerates unable to democratise anybody but needing a serious treatment themselves.

Here again, the August 2008 was a dividing line. If earlier it proved easy to manipulate elections, oppress TV companies, marginalise opposition, now the leaders in Georgia are much softer on

their citizens. What they are now trying to promote can be dubbed as “velvet authoritarianism”.

They feel something fundamental has changed, and that something is not just the disappearance of an unconditioned U.S. support with change of administration in the White House, but the international perception and assessment of Georgian policies and their picture in the world press that spills over from the president to the whole country and nation.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> of November is officially celebrated in Georgia as a national holiday – the date of victory of the revolution, but the old enthusiasm about this date is long gone. To begin with, to acquire a stable qualification of revolutionary, the process of democratic reforms must become salient in the period of governance of the force that accomplished the change of power and named itself the initiator of democratic reforms. Not least important for legitimization of their cause is whether the perpetrators of the regime change have laid foundation for the next political generations to come to power by means of fair elections, and thus have prevented a destructive recurrent revolution pattern. Until now lacking the appropriate practice, Georgia still faces the challenges for power change by means of non-revolutionary processes through elections, while “the revolutionaries” themselves have clearly demonstrated they are not in favour of creating favorable atmosphere and conditions for oppositionary political thought to gain foot in society, e.g. by allowing alternative TV channels to develop and function in an undisturbed manner. Since May 2008 elections the ruling United National Movement has constitutional majority in the new parliament, with only a nominal and non-functional oppositionary minority, and this also has been declared as another victory of democracy. So, with democrats firmly in power, why would opposition need to exist at all? Apparently, for the only reason that the Western partners on whom the survival of the country largely depends insist that the opposition should exist. That also explains why judiciary is not independent, and the private property rights are fragile. On the external front, relations with Russia represent a huge problem that

is not being addressed in a rational manner, and the prospect of conflict resolution is unrealistic as never before. However, since the traumatic and violent November 2007 crackdown on protestors and oppositionary TV, there have not been any major demonstrations or acts of civil disobedience. As a result of all these issues, the degree of people's discontent grows very high, and the August 2008 devastating war with Russia was the last accord that prompted most citizens to look doubtfully at the prospect of their country.

Looking at what kind of difficult processes are happening in Ukraine where citizens' living standard is higher than in Georgia, one clearly sees the end of the short era of "colour revolutions" in the post-Communist space. Yet one thing is what is dying, and another is what is emerging. What has emerged from the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia is a unique phenomenon of power – an attempt to establish a velvet authoritarianism resembling a weird *déjà vu* of the Soviet past on a small scale and based on a contract between power and people: I do not touch you if you do not touch me. This goes far beyond known the known schemes of imitational or facade democracies described in the literature. To understand how it can end, we need to understand how it developed.

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### **TRANSITION FROM THE "POST-SOVIET PERIOD" IN RETROSPECT**

After the period of turmoil, secessionist wars and "the rule of gun" in early 1990s, Shevardnadze during the first period of his presidency demonstrated understanding that he was in need of the establishment of democratic institutions in Georgia. The initial stage has been implemented in 1995-1998 with more or less success, but later other tendencies prevailed, corruption rampaged and, as a result a hybrid regime (Diamond's interpretation<sup>1</sup>), combining authoritarian and democratic elements, was created. Authoritarianism was expressed by the fact that the system was an almost exact analog of the Soviet nomenclature one which – through paternalist personal

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<sup>1</sup> Diamond.



and group ties – subordinated economy and business, along with other structures to the state. Shevardnadze’s regime could have lasted for some more time after 2003 if not for constituents of the hybrid democracy present, namely, the independent media and civil sector that allowed for growth and strengthening of political opposition movement<sup>1</sup>.

### **CIVIL SOCIETY BEFORE AND AFTER THE “ROSE REVOLUTION”**

Civil society in Georgia is firstly associated with the non-governmental sector, which by most of the respondents is perceived as remedial activities of NGOs. Only a small part of respondents attribute to it the independent mass media (considering the media as a more or less commercialized structure), and never – to any political groupings or movements. Actually, we have no experience of trade-union activities in Georgia, which in many ways (alongside with some religious institutions) shaped and affected the civil society consciousness in the West.

Since mid 1990s non-governmental sector started to flourish due to Western support, and Zurab Zhvania, then Speaker of the Parliament actively supported these developments. Civil sector was backing up the orientation towards the Western values declared by the state, and the freedom of expression was to a greater extent curbed by stereotypical and mythologised mass consciousness, than by direct or tacit governmental regulations. From 2001 – the first serious political crisis in the entire Shevardnadze rule – the Zhvania-Saakashvili group known as “young reformers” bred a political opposition that invested in favourite NGOs and mass media that were to play a crucial role in the events of the autumn of 2003 in Georgia.

Soon after the “Rose Revolution” many of its active protagonists amongst the leaders of the civil society took up key posts in the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Civil Society and the Rose Revolution in Georgia* (George Khutsishvili, ed.). Tbilisi: ICCN & Cordaid, 2008.

government, parliament and administration of the president. Rustavi-2 TV mentioned soon after revolution that the Georgian civil sector became “disintegrated and hollow”, and that could be understood as a certain verification of the leaders’ ambitions indicating they were the very backbone of Georgian civil society. Yet that had also proven a certain political credo of the new government, which could be expressed as follows. Georgian civil society turned into a democratic government in order to carry out the democratic reform, so its function is fulfilled and there is no more need for a strong non-governmental sector and free media. The new leaders expressed faith that such a “succession line” would guarantee the post-revolutionary development of the state power to follow the line of democratization and not that of bureaucratization or even authoritarianism. The governmental reformers imagined themselves in the role of “founding fathers” of America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: cowboys in prairie with the lynch law reigning around but with a clear idea of free and law-based democratic future in mind. Only later they have revealed that neither their understanding of democratic ideals, norms or principles, nor their intention to follow them was obvious.

Almost immediately after inauguration of the almost unanimously elected President Saakashvili, the Constitutional changes have been introduced that shifted enormous power onto president and curbed that of the parliament (old parliament’s mandate was extended until spring 2004). That was followed by another step: ultimata by which persons and companies enriched under Shevardnadze regime would yield part of their fortune to the state in exchange for safety guarantee. This was done without following any legal norms or trials; yet the public at large and the international community, still being under the euphoria of people power’s victory, looked condescendingly at these risky and arrogant moves, as leaders kept assuring them they needed extraordinary credit and maximum possible resources to execute painful reforms.

## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE CONCEPT OF A LOYAL CITIZEN IN TODAY'S GEORGIA**

Official Georgian ideology divides the society into two parts: those who express doubt or scepticism with regard to any of the government's actions or policies, and those who never express any sign of doubt or discontent.

## **CHALLENGES BEFORE UPGRADING TO A CIVIL NATION**

The problem of integration of different ethnic groups into a civil nation is fully revealed in stable attitudes that exist in Georgian society towards secessionist Abkhaz and South Ossets. Even in pre-revolution times most public discussions on unresolved conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia turned into unending and fruitless debates on how they should be qualified, as ethnic, ethno-political, ethno-territorial, political or what? "Ethnic conflict" was always dismissed from the start: we are not the kind of people to breed xenophobia or suppress minorities. Debates in most cases ended in diagnosing the problem as political and imposed by Russia, and the final conclusion used to be that this is really a Georgian-Russian conflict, and if Russia leaves us alone, it will be no problem for us to agree with Abkhaz and Ossets about living together peacefully and happily in one state. Unrealistic and counter-productive as it was, the described discourse also revealed the psychological urge in Georgian society to alleviate the burden by fully shifting the responsibility (locus of control) for what happened to an external dominating force, and by putting aside an uncomfortable dialogue with unrelenting small communities. Shevardnadze had to reject "Georgian-Abkhaz" and "Georgian-Osset" as identifying the conflicts, but, realising the consequences, he would not subscribe to calling it Georgian-Russian and, as a result, a clumsy "Conflict in Abkhazia" was registered in Georgian and some foreign official sources. Saakashvili had to go through exactly the same path, although he was undoubtedly proactive in proving the chilling reality

of the Georgian-Russian conflict, which rendered the solution of Abkhaz and South-Osset issues as unrealistic for nearest decades.

### **Forging an External Picture of the Internal Situation**

Civil society organisations and networks represent an indispensable alternative source of information and knowledge to reach this goal. Their independence from the government needs to be proven to play this role. The accuracy and impact of open source analysis may be strengthened by incorporating dimensions such as mass perceptions and stereotypes, patterns of behaviour of power groups, decision makers' psychological profiles and their power charts, the influence of wishful thinking and groupthink on the decision-making teams: this will allow to narrow the error margin in building a trustworthy picture of crisis-generating factors. It is hardly expectable from the official information gathered through governmental channels that a certain degree of subjectivity be avoided that is often influenced by the desire of local governments to avoid accusations and create a more favourable environment for themselves. In the first years following the "coloured revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine excess credit was given by to the information provided by the local governments and the GONGOs, which had a negative impact on predictability and accuracy of the respective situational pictures and scenarios of immediate future developments. Unconditional support from the Bush Administration to the Georgian leadership helped them get a free hand in making risky steps that led to many complications. At the same time, there are indications that the information about possible political manipulation of the existing dependency of EU states on the energy supply from Russia was underestimated, which implied grown security risks for Europe.

The case of Georgian-Russian armed conflict in August 2008 clearly demonstrated insufficiency of the existing early warning mechanism systems: despite of the growing signals that the tension in South-Ossetia and Abkhazia conflict zones could turn into an open confrontation, the overall assessment fell short of the conclusion

that strong preventive measures should have been taken to avoid it. There were few warnings on practical inevitability of war, only predictions of tension and risk growth (the ICG report on Georgia spoke about “high probability of hostilities”; however, Russian expert Pavel Felgenhauer as early as May/June 2008 warned that the probability of war was around 90%, although he was not sure if Abkhazia or South Ossetia would be involved, but these warnings have been largely ignored. Even now the forecasts of implications of post-August crisis on energy security of the Black and Caspian Sea area significantly differ from each other.

## The Potential of Public Diplomacy in the Post-War Environment: The Case of Georgian-Ossetian Conflict

# 2010

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, Georgia, The Caucasus Regional Coordinator of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, 2010. <http://scar.gmu.edu/articles/work-caucasus>

## THE POTENTIAL OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE POST-WAR ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF GEORGIAN-OSSETIAN CONFLICT

Just a couple of years ago we could relatively easily travel to Tskhinvali to visit our friends, and they would visit us in Tbilisi even more often. Earlier, until the summer of 2004, we could organize a training, a seminar or cultural event in Tskhinvali for the local population, or invite them to Tbilisi or other Georgian cities. The Ossetians also were active and creative. Now it feels like all that was in a dream. We went through another cycle of violence, hatred and isolation. In such cases, the escalation of the conflict reaches a new high and the dialogue has to start from ground zero again. Luckily, in the civil societies of both sides there are people who remember the times of peaceful co-existence and who believe in reconciliation. Most importantly, they want to see reconciliation happen. They do not wait for decisions or orders, but instead act as their hearts and minds tell them. Thanks to this, people on both sides of the conflict who had experience with peace work, joined forces right after the war of August 2008 to form the “Point of View” process. Yet the

public diplomacy can be successful only if it is supported by the political process. An example of this are the dialogues of 1990's when the Georgian-Ossetian and the Georgian-Abkhaz informal dialogues was active initially but winded down with time.

The best results are achieved when and where there is cooperation between the governmental and the non-governmental efforts. The infrastructures of peace have recorded success stories in dealing with conflicts in various countries. For example, the reconciliation commissions in Ghana, Kenya and other countries were successful precisely because they included both official representatives of the government structures, as well as civil society leaders. Such commissions work on the level of the central government, as well as on the level of local structures of self-governance. Of course, all these countries also have their share of the problems, but what's important is that by the opinion of the majority of experts the first steps of overcoming the post-war isolation of the sides is achieved.

Against the background of disillusionment and disbelief in peace initiatives in our societies, the initiatives such as the "Point of View" attract attention. What is it: an effect of contract or an indication of mutual interest? The latter argument is supported by the fact that the selection for the Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz youth leaders dialogue program conducted by ICCN with a consortium of partners in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Europe is always conducted from a big pool of candidates who with great enthusiasm engage into this hard work.

The number of conflict resolution professionals and regional conflict resolution networks is also growing. What's important now is that they start exerting influence and are able to convince the societies that a just and sustainable peace is possible; they should also be able to have influence on the decision makers so they would also work toward peace.

# 2011

In August 2008, the conflicts in Georgia were briefly and violently 'defrosted' to transform into a Kosovo precedent and Saakashvili's actions in Tskhinvali encouraged Russia to finalise its preferred configuration in the region at the expense of cutting off the already fragile ties with Georgia and the embittered feelings of its people. The situation was ideally locked again by Putin's resolution not to talk to Saakashvili and Saakashvili's respective formula "First deoccupation, then the dialogue". Almost the whole world supported Georgia in non-recognition of the seceded autonomies, but no dynamics followed, the security situation did not improve, and the conviction grew internationally that unconditional dialogue had no alternative, and it called for action.

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, for Black Sea Peacebuilding Network of GFSIS (BSPN), 10 November, 2011.

'Engagement through Cooperation' had been subtitle to the extended document endorsed by the government of Georgia in January 2010. The title read "State Strategy on Occupied Territories". The document was intended for consideration – to be followed by implementation – on both sides of the conflict divide, yet was

## ENGAGEMENT WITHOUT RECOGNITION OR RECOGNITION WITHOUT ENGAGEMENT?

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downright rejected without recognition on the “other side”, overtly due to the contradiction between its title and the subtitle. Abkhaz and Ossets oppose to identification of their territories as “occupied”, on which qualification the Georgian state had been insisting after the August war. Shortly after the Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, Georgia adopted the Law on Occupied Territories that refers to the entire conflict zones in Georgia as such. Since then the Venice Commission of CoE, seeing all the pitfalls of locking up the post-war status quo, had advised the government to amend the Law, which was met only on the point of facilitated regime for the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid (February 2010). Soon it became obvious that implementation of the Strategy was incompatible with requirements of the Law that maintained priority. The predicament was promised to be overcome in Action Plan to the Strategy that sets the instruments by which the “engagement” should be reached, but again it failed to gain credibility.

According to the document, engagement through cooperation pertains not only to citizens, groups and communities, but also to the authorities of the conflict-affected areas. Logical enough: increasing cross-border trade and enhancing human security cannot be achieved without facilitating border regimes, which requires collaboration between the officials on both sides. It was clear though that the *de facto* authorities would oppose to any attempts to be engaged by (or with) the Georgian government sponsored/promoted strategies. However, there was the issue of consistency and credibility of the entire endeavour. Continuing public diplomacy efforts of the civil societies on both sides encourage the track-two to raise to track-one-and-a-half (mixed/joint formal and informal formats), yet this proves unacceptable to the same government who praises in its strategic document the civil society initiatives and calls for the confidence-building programmes. The argument that the Georgian government brings about the lack of desire to communicate with *de facto* authorities is that the latter are fully dependent on Moscow’s will and therefore it makes no sense to develop bilater-

al communication channels. The Abkhaz and Ossets' precondition voiced more than once at the Geneva talks "First signing of the agreement on non-resumption of hostilities, then mitigating the border regime and starting talks on a broad spectrum of issues" had again been countered from the Georgian side by readdressing the issue to Moscow.

On the one hand, there is an objective need for deisolation of the secessionist regions, and the document that by its approaches substantiates this need. On the other, we see the actual policies that deepen isolation and increase security risks. Russia has achieved its geopolitical goals in the regions; its military presence has been reestablished after withdrawal of the bases by the May 2005 agreement. The longer the stalemate lasts, the more it means for Georgia vanishing chances to reverse the situation any time in future, and the increased chances for South Ossetia and especially Abkhazia to be recognized by more states. Without sustaining non-recognition with engagement, we risk to encourage and ensure the final recognition. The only viable alternative would require overcoming antagonism towards Russia, followed by the start of Georgia-Russia dialogue, followed by real engagement and deisolation policies of the Georgian state towards the seceded regions, and the subsequent confidence atmosphere achieved between the sides.

Such a vision of "engagement without recognition" is shared by practically all external stakeholders, but the problem is that they do not see a motivation for them to invest an increased effort towards its realisation.

Stimuli and Obstacles to Democratic Transition and  
Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus

International Conference, Cadenabbia (Cadenabbia di Griante), Italy,  
2 November 2011

Dr. George Khutsishvili  
Director, International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation  
Tbilisi, Georgia

# 2011

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict  
and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, International Conference,  
Cadenabbia di Griante, Italy, 2 November, 2011.

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## STIMULI AND OBSTACLES TO DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Unresolved conflicts and stalled peace processes in the Middle East, post-Soviet Caucasus and other regions of the modern world represent not only hardest political issues to the states and international organizations, as well as an intellectual challenge to analysts and mediators. They are painful and traumatic for communities involved in conflicts and therefore deprived from normal development and welfare. Although in some cases ceasefire holds, positive peace remains a dream for many troubled areas in the world. Many of the existing conflict areas have turned into uncontrolled venues for smuggling, trafficking in people, illegal weapon and drug trade and international terrorism. Apart from the threat of re-escalation of the existing conflicts and renewal of hostilities, there is also a serious danger that existing tension areas and latent conflicts will grow into real ones, thus complicating the task of international peace and human security. To address these painful issues, civil society in many countries organizes in networks that transcend state borders

and collaborate to press politicians towards engaging in dialogue with opponents and resolving the problems in a non-violent way. It is only recently that the work done by non-governmental organizations in the field of conflict transformation became acknowledged by the international community.

Despite a definite orientation to integrate in Europe, for the three countries of the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – the post-Soviet transition period turned out to be especially painful, not in the least because of the unresolved ethno-territorial conflicts of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia (the former grew into an interstate standoff between Armenia and Azerbaijan, while the latter two represent internal disputes in Georgia where Russia has played a controversial role of a peace broker and an interested party). Hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs are still waiting to be allowed to return home, but the negotiations that formally last almost two decades had been deadlocked (so-called “frozen conflicts”), until Russia unilaterally recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states after the five-day war of August 2008, thus establishing a new lasting status quo.

Long before “the Arab Spring” of 2011, “color revolutions” in South-East Europe and the post-Soviet space raised high expectations of a speedy democratic transition and integration in Europe. “Rose Revolution” in Georgia in November 2003, in which civil society groups played an important role, was seen as fostering anti-corruption reform in the country and creating powerful stimuli for democratic development in other parts of the post-Soviet space, notably in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, etc. Democratic movements, in their turn, created pressure on the states to test new tracks of dispute resolution. The “people power” that has entitled new leaders with enormous credit, contained a clear demand to find a solution to the problems created by unresolved conflicts. Yet the very first attempt to defreeze the situation in the Georgian-Osset conflict zone in summer 2004 that grew to renewal of hostilities and further alienated the parties to conflict gave rise to active discussions about

acceptability of breaking the status quo by getting the system out of the equilibrium in order to make it more manageable.

On the other hand, it is known that the longer a “frozen” conflict lasts, the lesser chances remain for the communities to reconcile and for the refugees – to return home, while the alienation grows. Peaceful resolution plans were offered by the Minsk group and other venues, yet the peace process over all three main conflict areas in the South Caucasus remained stuck. Involvement of the professional mediators and consultants, efforts of the international community, numerous UN Security Council resolutions proved insufficient to overcome the stalemate. Moreover, Georgian-Russian relations were seriously aggravated after the August 2008 five-day war, turning the whole region even more fragile.

The key to reconciliation and non-violent resolution of conflicts is the political will of the leaders combined with raised civil consciousness of the active social groups on all sides of conflict. As proved by bitter experience of the past decade, this historic task cannot be feasible without a sustained collaboration and partnership with the nationally and regionally based networks of NGOs and CSOs and development of the independent mass media – watchdogs of freedom and carriers of liberal democratic values.

# 2011

*Introduction*

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By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia; Presented at the International Conference, Istanbul, Turkey, 21 November, 2011.

## UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: THE PROCESS, THE PROSPECT, AND THE “ENGAGEMENT” WITHOUT ENGAGEMENT

### INTRODUCTION

All three main unresolved conflicts of the South Caucasus – over Abkhazia, South-Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh – are essentially different from each other, but many features that characterize both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, can be attributed also to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. We have frozen status quo imposed on the conflict situations and contributed to from all participating sides, and a stagnated process of conflict transformation with the risk of a renewal of hostilities, hundreds of thousands of IDPs and refugees that still wait to be returned home, and an inefficient international facilitation of peace negotiations. Efforts of Georgia and her partners at mobilizing the international pressure on Russia have predictably proven ineffective. The longer the stalemate lasts, the less

likely it is for Georgia to reverse the current geopolitical status quo, unless the country manages in the nearest time to develop together with its strategic partners new and more realistic approaches and platforms based on realistic assessments and feasible tools.

The geopolitical situation in the South Caucasus is marked by unresolved conflicts, undeveloped state of democracy, and, as a result, hindered Euro-integration prospect. The vector points at EU and – in case of Georgia at least – also to NATO, but the dynamics are more those of infinite series in mathematics, ever approaching the goal but never reaching it. In Georgia's case unresolved conflicts and occupied territories represent a major counter-indication for integration, but lack of democracy and respect for human rights (cf. Thomas Hammarberg's report) represent an even more serious obstacle. In the regional context security remains impaired caused by a cumulative effect of unresolved conflicts, first of all, the continuing Azerbaijani-Armenian confrontation that has formed over the Karabakh issue, but later acquired other dimensions.

Since the violent ethno-political outbursts of early 1990s a fragile ceasefire had been maintained in and around the conflict zones based on international agreements and various counterweights [cf. MacFarlane and Khutsishvili], until in August 2008 the conflicts in Georgia were briefly and violently "de-frozen", establishing a new status quo in the region and launching a new and higher wave of Russia-Georgia confrontation. The international precedent set by the Kosovo independence encouraged Russia to enforce since early 2008 its integrative policies towards the breakaway regions of Georgia. The outcome was triggered by the Georgian military operation in Tskhinvali on August 7-8, 2008. [cf. the Tagliavini report]. The Medvedev-Sarkozy six-point agreement of August 12, 2008 had ceased the hostilities and obliged the sides to withdraw forces to pre-war positions and conform to the mandate of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to take over the observation role. The crucial consequence of the August tragic developments had been the decrees signed on August 26 by the President of RF

and acknowledging the status of independent states for Abkhazia and South-Ossetia Republics.

Reference to the R2P (Responsibility to Protect) argument, spuriously relevant for the South Ossetia case as it was, caused the world leaders to react to the Russian actions in Georgia as “disproportionate”, rather than entirely unlawful. The UN World Summit Outcome Document adopted at the General Assembly High-Level Plenary Meeting in September 2005 defines “Responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”. The UN document refers only to the protective actions within the country of citizenship, and not to military operations abroad, on the territories of sovereign states [Cf. G. Evans, then ICG Chair] that might be legally interpreted as vindication of aggression. Thus Russia’s argumentation for expanding the military operation and destroying Georgian infrastructure far beyond conflict zones could be disputed right away, yet *Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi* (What is allowed for Jupiter, is not allowed for the bull). Following its policies, since 2008 Russia has succeeded in securing six UN member states to recognize Abkhazia, and five to recognize South Ossetia, thus trying to change their international image from “disputed territories” to “partially recognized states” and secure for them a status higher than the halfway-house recognition status.

Both Putin-Medvedev’s resolution not to talk to the Georgian President and Saakashvili’s adherence to the formula “first de-occupation, then dialogue” effectively locked the situation within the post-August status quo.

The situation has changed significantly since the immediate post-August developments of 2008. The Russian leadership is taking efforts to make everyone adapt to the “new realities”. According to their approach, there are no more internal ethno-political conflicts in Georgia: this issue has allegedly expired with the external recognition of the two self-proclaimed states. The international missions stationed in Georgia with the mandate of monitoring ceasefire and observing the situation on the ground (the security zones) needed to be reconsidered accordingly. There is, according to the Russian



perspective, no need to monitor security inside the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as Russians are doing it anyway, and, as long as the Russian version is concerned, there is no threat to the Georgian side from the “former disputed territories”. On the other hand, Georgia protests to one-sided international missions on its territory, as this would confirm the Russian interpretation of the actual security threat.

Georgian government-supported media have tried in the past period to revive hopes for mobilizing the international pressure to make Russia revoke its decisions, and when this did not sound convincing, the centrifugal tendencies and insurgencies in North Caucasus were portrayed as able to demolish the Federation, or at least weaken it to the extent that Russia would no more actively attend to the issues of so-called “near abroad”. It is noteworthy that whenever an election period approaches, or political struggle in the country reaches a high point, the NATO membership issue is activated by the media, presumably, to strengthen hopes that the current government is able to speed up the Euro-Atlantic integration process, although it is more an effort to just to shift the public opinion from current affairs to a “brighter prospect” ahead. While almost the whole world supported Georgia in non-recognition of the seceded autonomies as states, no dynamics could follow in given circumstances, the overall security situation did not improve, and the conviction grew internationally that unconditional dialogue had no alternative, and it called for action.

In an attempt to demonstrate an effort to overcome this impasse, in January 2010 the Georgian government adopted a document titled “State Strategy on Occupied Territories”. The subtitle to the document read: “Engagement through cooperation”. The document was open to consideration – to be followed by an implementation phase – on both sides of the conflict divide, yet it was downright rejected to be even considered by the “other side”, overtly because it contained the term “occupied territories” in its title. Both Abkhaz and Ossets have been opposed to the identification of their territories as “occupied” – a term the Georgian government has insisted

on ever since the August 2008 war but only lately slowly reflected in the language of international documents. It is worth mentioning here that on 23 October 2008, shortly after Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, the Georgian Parliament endorsed "The Law on Occupied Territories" defining "the status of territories occupied as a result of the military aggression of the Russian Federation" and envisaging a "special legal regime" on these territories. Since the Venice Commission's (the Council of Europe's advisory body) criticism of certain clauses of the law placing a lock on the post-war status quo, it had advised the Georgian government to amend that law. However, in light of the Commission's concerns, the only amendment made by the Georgian parliament has been facilitation of the humanitarian regime allowing for the delivery of emergency aid (February 2010).

2011

Soon however it became obvious that implementation of the Strategy document was largely incompatible with the requirements of the "Law on Occupied Territories". Furthermore, the legal weight assigned to the Law is greater than that of the governmental Strategy document. This predicament was promised to be overcome in the Action Plan (put into force in July 2010) that set the instruments through which to operationalize the "engagement", but again the Action Plan failed to move things forward. And the third and so far the latest phase – so-called Modalities document (October 2010) setting the conditions of "doing business" on occupied territories – has further complicated the existing irrelevance between the law and the goals of governmental documents in question (GYLA assessment).

According to the Strategy document, "engagement through cooperation" refers not only to citizens, groups and communities, but also to the de-facto authorities of the conflict areas. This seems logical enough: increasing cross-border trade and enhancing human security cannot be achieved without facilitating border regimes, which requires collaboration between officials on both sides. It was clear from the outset that the de-facto authorities would oppose any initiative for engagement directed by Georgian government spon-

sored strategies. However, there was also the issue of consistency as a means of generating credibility for the strategy. On the one hand, the state strategy document calls for civil society initiatives (grassroots or otherwise) and confidence-building measures. This sounded encouraging, especially as a means of upgrading dialogue initiatives from track-two processes to track-one-and-a-half (mixed/joint formal and informal formats). On the other hand, however, such initiatives were unlikely to have support from the same government which endorses the policy of “one conflict” (refusing to acknowledge Abkhazian and Osset as parties to conflict, and defining the conflict as Georgian-Russian). According to the Georgian government, a major argument is that since the de-facto authorities are fully dependent on Moscow, it does not make sense to develop bilateral channels of communication. This deadlock has also been reinforced by the Abkhaz and Ossetian precondition of “first signing the non-use of force agreement, and then dialogue on a broad spectrum of issues”, something that the Georgian side would not afford as it is understood as leading to a “creeping recognition”.

Without sustaining a credible policy of “engagement without recognition”, Georgia risks to encourage and eventually ensure the opposite outcome to the intended one, namely, recognition. The only viable alternative policy to the failing “engagement without recognition” as it looks now, would be for Georgia to overcome its antagonism towards Russia (and vice versa). This would allow for the start of a Georgia-Russia dialogue, followed by real engagement and a credible Georgian policy of “de-isolation” towards the breakaway regions. This would also enhance the confidence-building process on both sides. Such an outlook however, whilst welcomed by practically all external stakeholders, suffers from a deficit of political will and motivation on both sides.

The recent history has shown clearly that it is hard to count on achieving progress in conflict transformation and intercommunal Georgian-Abkhaz or Georgian-Osset dialogue within a context of active Russia-Georgia confrontation, given the ethno-cultural character of Abkhaz and Osset societies and the whole set of geopolit-

ical conditions in which they have to define their policies. It is also obvious, however, that development of the dialogue with Russia is a necessary but insufficient condition for the achievement of progress in confidence-building. Bilateral ties are as essential here, as a supportive environment.

On the one hand, there is a clear incentive for Georgia to promote de-isolation of the secessionist entities that now totally depend on Russia. However, we see the actual policies on both sides that deepen alienation from Georgia and increase security risks. Russia has essentially achieved its geopolitical goals in the regions; its military presence has been reestablished after withdrawal of the bases achieved by the May 2005 agreement. While South Ossetia's prospect is vague, Abkhazia's economic de-isolation is likely to happen anyway. The longer the stalemate lasts, the more it means vanishing chances for Georgia to reverse the situation any time in future, and the increased chances, for Abkhazia at least, to be recognized by more states. Without sustaining non-recognition with engagement, Georgia risks to encourage the final recognition or final annexation (in South Ossetia case). The only viable alternative would require overcoming antagonist rhetorics towards Russia, followed by the start of Georgia-Russia dialogue that could facilitate real engagement and de-isolation process, and the subsequent confidence atmosphere achieved between the sides. Such a vision of "engagement without recognition" is shared by practically all external stakeholders, but the problem is that they do not see a motivation for them to invest an increased effort towards its realization. Unless the Georgian policies are in congruence with the changed geopolitical environment, and with expectations of strategic partners of Georgia, the existing formal non-recognition consensus will not add dynamics to the gradually deteriorating process.

- The EU as a major frame of reference of all regional powers needs to effectivize its policies with regard to main issues of the South Caucasus. Keeping in mind the inefficiency of EaP and other platforms, EU needs to develop new strategies

based on realistic assessment of the current situation and the prospect of development in the region;

- To overcome the ongoing crisis, Georgia needs to start dialogue with Russian Federation – which requires a strategic approach based on good will from both sides – and introduce newly defined inclusive policies towards its seceded parts;
- Civil society efforts to develop confidence-building mechanisms need to be encouraged and supported;
- Whilst the policy of “engagement without recognition” still looks like having no viable alternative, it must allow for real confidence-building processes and sustained collaboration on issues such as human security, reunification of families, cross-ABL trade on both sides, interest-based citizen interaction, educational programs, information sharing, culture and sports, etc.;
- A reasonable regional neighborhood platform is yet to be developed. At the same time, a more favorable regional context should be pursued by assisting the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as between Turkey and Armenia (with a hindsight on Azerbaijan’s position), promotion of transnational projects (preferably, with Armenia’s participation), development of cooperation with Turkey as a rising international actor in the region, creation of region-wide business structures and the civil society networking;
- Despite existing difficult situation in Georgia, this country could undertake the role of a mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue;
- The long-term solution of the South Caucasus conflicts lies through the development of integration processes in the region.

Will election year work as a reset button for Georgian democracy?

By GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI | Jan 26, 2012



By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, Democracy & Freedom Watch, 26 January, 2012.

For a stuck screensaver democracy in Georgia, the election year may work as a reset key

26 January 2012

# 2012

[Two presidents that came to power under the sign of change meet January 30<sup>th</sup>, and here are the thoughts elicited by my friend Ambassador K. S. Yalowitz's letter]

We live in the election year 2012, and I belong to those who believe change is needed, and the alternative exists. But is the change possible in a country where all branches of power, information and resources are controlled by one power vertical, the ruling team insists it is unchangeable, and the silent majority's voice is accounted to the administrative majority? Looking back, we see that similar hopes, questions and doubts existed in the election year 2003, but the peaceful revolution happened. What could have dramatically elicited within a few days in a skeptical society's mind, where everyone was supposed to know everything about anyone else? The turning point that had made November 23 possible was created by the opposition media who

...had generated a powerful virtual means that had generated a long-term strategic vision. To maintain power, the above two critical virtual factors had to be maintained as long into future as possible. Along with real struggle with organized crime and petty corruption, dimensions of grand illusion had

## FOR A STUCK SCREENSAVER DEMOCRACY IN GEORGIA, THE ELECTION YEAR MAY WORK AS A RESET KEY

*Two presidents that came to power under the sign of change meet January 30<sup>th</sup>. Below are some thoughts elicited by my friend Ambassador K. S. Yalowitz's letter, writes Dr. George Khutsishvili, founder (1994) and director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), he teaches international conflict, authors and edits books and articles, and also represents in the Caucasus region the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC).*

We live in the election year 2012, and I belong to those who believe change is needed, and the alternative exists. But is the change possible in a country where all branches of power, information and resources are controlled by one power vertical, the ruling team insists it is unchangeable, and the silent majority's voice is accounted to the administrative majority? Looking back, we see that similar hopes, questions and doubts existed in the election year 2003, but the peaceful revolution happened. What could have dramatically

clicked within a few days in a skeptical society' mind, where everyone was supposed to know everything about anyone else? The turning point that had made November 23 possible was created by the opposition media who demonstrated the effects of (a) virtual critical mass of popular support, and (b) virtual US support for the change. Both supportive factors existed – along with others – but not to an overwhelming extent the media effect showed. Yet as the TV bell rang, the words were made flesh, and people believed that somehow had to end as it did.

Real success achieved by virtual means must have generated a long-term strategic vision. To maintain power, the above two critical virtual factors had to be maintained as long into future as possible. Along with real struggle with organized crime and petty corruption, dimensions of grand illusion had been shaping since 2004. The archetypal struggle of good and evil was to be exposed domestically and internationally, the image of external threat had to be unmanageable and perennial, prompting everyone to take side or grow marginal (*tertium non datur*). Reform registers as positive, but here also served as a divide for breaking up the society into two camps: all who disagree with reformers are against reforms! “Young reformers” has also turned into another dividing line – age, and with a really aged previous presidency this notion impressed people. Thus not many really objected when they heard that the older generation was by default incapable of reforming and needed therefore to be flushed.

To further shape people's minds, modern versions of ancient sophisms were used: if Zhirinovsky says “human rights are violated in Georgia”, and you say “human rights are violated in Georgia”, aren't you and Zhirinovsky saying the same? (From a TV debate in 2005). Can a loyal citizen afford to speak in one voice with the Villain? Smart loyal citizens should have immediately inferred: the only way to escape identification with the Villain is to say the opposite: in this case, “human rights are not violated in Georgia”. As simple as that. If all citizens get smarter, reforms proceed better. As many NGO leaders joined government, we no more need NGOs:

“civil society slash government” is doing both jobs. And finally, do we need another party in power or any opposition at all if all the pro-reform, young, law-abiding, smart and loyal citizens are already in a ruling party or supporting it? A desirable goal of democratic reform? Strong state with cooperative human-right defenders and the strong police in standby mode with no demonstrators in view. Velvet authoritarianism almost achieved, and is it not for everyone’s good? With smart power and smart citizens we can spin-doctor anything, even the August war ruins.

Color revolutions faded elsewhere, but Georgia kept raising emotions in the West as a country of winning democracy in a post-totalitarian environment. Whoever tuned to the Georgia channel, would see one and the same bright and neat image. Wishful thinking prevented many from realizing that was not even a façade democracy, but only a screensaver that was used so often that it had finally replaced the real picture. Now it is clear that the screen is stuck and would not go to normal, unless a reset key is pressed. Many people in Georgia keep thinking that the reset key lies over the ocean, in the White House and on the Hill. But isn’t it WE who CAN do CHANGE, and no one else?

2012



# Misunderstanding that Georgia will not Facilitate a Solution

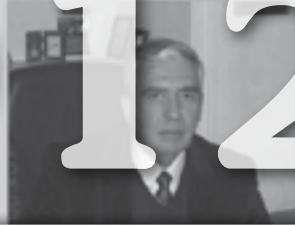
by GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI | Dec 3, 2012

If our strategic allies' warning is about reversing the current legal processes, I would say it is impossible and could be even harmful. If it is about being more considerate in decision-planning and aware of the environment, I would agree and subscribe to it.

Georgia has recently been in the focus of international attention. When voting is done, counting follows, but no unambiguous formula implies of why people preferred to vote as they did, so interpretations begin. The defeated UNM sent around a message that people (a) preferred a magnate

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# 2012



By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, Democracy & Freedom Watch, December 3, 2012.

...erely, fighting unemployment, building economy and agriculture, and normalizing relations with Russia while pursuing the course of Euro-Atlantic integration. Problems to overcome have proven much grimmer upon a closer look than it seemed before, but people show patience to let the new government consolidate and stabilize... and then start to fix it from...

## MISUNDERSTANDING THAT GEORGIA WILL NOT FACILITATE A SOLUTION

If our strategic allies' warning is about reversing the current legal processes, I would say it is impossible and could be even harmful. If it is about being more considerate in decision-planning and aware of the environment, I would agree and subscribe to it.

Georgia has recently been in the focus of international attention. When voting is done, counting follows, but no unambiguous formula implies of why people preferred to vote as they did, so interpretations begin. The defeated UNM sent around a message that people (a) preferred a magnate because he is rich and made generous promises, and (b) acted under the influence of televised prison torture tapes. They were also warning the world about a "dangerous force" coming to power to bring Georgia back into Russia's sphere of dominance. The winner Georgian Dream declared their assignment and the societal demand in investigation of past crimes, fighting unemployment, building economy and agriculture, and normalizing relations with Russia while pursuing the course of Euro-Atlantic integration. Problems to overcome have proven much

grimmer upon a closer look than it seemed before, but people show patience to let the new government consolidate and stabilize, and then start to tackle them.

The external world watching the October elections and wondering at its result just could not imagine to what extent Saakashvili's regime was unpopular in Georgia, as it had all major media sources monopolized and the propaganda machine was in full swing. Both parties before the election claimed the support of the Georgian people was on their side. If after the elections it turned out the "nationals" were right, they could now rely on people's activism to prevent the processes about which they are ringing alarms worldwide. But this is not happening. No wonder: the "nationals" boosted image of popular support crushed as soon as they let go of the reins of power. So they decided to use all means to discredit the new government and maintain their image abroad to build the support of the international community as a shield and a tool for counter-attack. They even do not stop at predicting international isolation of the country if the new authorities do not "come to their senses".

2012

### **The Situation in Georgia as seen from the outside:**

The victory of the Georgian Dream coalition was unexpected yet welcomed in the West as the first precedent of peaceful and legitimate change of power in the post-Soviet space. The subsequent decision of President Saakashvili and the defeated UNM to go into opposition and let the winner form a government incurred hailing as a confirmation of their "truly democratic aspiration". Georgia was again seen as proposing everyone a model democracy, now in the form of cohabitation. "Extreme concern" started to manifest in some Western leaders and influential media sources after the former Interior Minister Akhalaia (extremely disliked in Georgia) and the Chief of Staff Kalandadze were detained, followed by a couple dozen other arrests. Many Westerners see in the actions of the new Georgian government a bad post-Soviet pattern of getting even with the predecessors in power – including top persons – and implementing a practice of political persecution until the political

opponent is fully dissolved and neutralized: kind of an instinctive behavior of a political animal, very intimately familiar to real-politicians around the world. The insatiable urge of political revenge is described in some US web forums as feeding the actions declared as restoration of the rule of law. Fears are being expressed about the prospect of one authoritarian regime changing the other, with overall regress for the nation.

### **The Situation in Georgia as seen from the inside:**

The October elections resulted in the defeat of the UNM not just because a super-rich person entered the scene and promised better life, but mainly because Georgians used a historic opportunity to put a barrier before an insatiably power-hungry regime marked by selective justice, impunity of power structures, unaccountable waste of taxpayers' money, and most of all, appalling prospect of the emerging "smart dictatorship" able to be useful to and look attractive for the world superpowers while keeping their iron grip on everything inside. The official West's criticism of post-election processes in Georgia is offered in the form of a friendly advice and warning, which people take seriously, but explain it as largely caused by lack of information and the work of lobbying companies on UNM payroll. An informally expressed proposal to share the picture of Saakashvili and his team as democratic rulers "who sometimes made mistakes" is totally unacceptable for most Georgians. Internal observers also allege that accepting legitimacy of the current legal prosecutions and investigations against former high officials could naturally raise a question towards the international community: why did you not adequately react at the time we spoke out against those crimes? Public opinion in Georgia is concerned by the reactions in the West, but tends in favor of the development of legal processes until their logical end, despite the West's reaction. So what has caused the current predicament and what may come out of it?

### **COHABITATION: A MODEL OR A MYTH?**

It would be ideal to see majority and minority working peacefully in the parliament, agreeing or disagreeing, but not undermining each other or calling each other enemies of the nation. The ruling team who notoriously demonstrated intolerance towards different opinion and was marginalizing the opposition while in power should hardly be expected to transform into a minority able to cohabit. And Ivanishvili in his turn does not look like a person to forgive his rival who stripped him of citizenship and called him an agent for the enemy. Therefore, Saakashvili's proposal of diarchy a.k.a. cohabitation looked doubtful from the very start; either "nationals" would manage to weaken and split the new majority, or would weaken and dissolve themselves. What looked as the main post-election achievement – consensus on basic modus vivendi for the new parliament – is under serious threat, and this could hardly be otherwise. A facilitated problem-solving can only be in keeping the process within manageable limits and not letting it collapse completely.

2012

### **POLITICAL APPROPRIATENESS OR THE RULE OF LAW?**

Here again this may differ as seen from different standpoints, internal and external. Internally, political appropriateness is seen in fulfilling the societal demand of punishing the wrongdoers, which is in accord with demands of rule of law, provided transparency in the process and adherence to justice. People who for so long felt deprived of a sense of justice in the country – and in Georgia's case this has proven to be a majority of voters – expect to see that action is done in that direction. Yet the same situation is seen in the West as alarming and the solution is seen in curbing the legal prosecutions and concentrating on the actually failing cohabitation. The reality is that the new force in power needs to stabilize its position, and the urging to weaken the political opponents coincides with the public's expectations, so the law is enforced. Rulers cannot just stop the detainments, they can only protract the trials. Rulers are in a way hostages of their victory. But who will openly claim

that it's really the voters' will to restore justice that creates political problems for the external image of a country? You can never explain this to voters, nowhere. I traveled to Kiev right before the parliamentary elections in Ukraine, and did not meet a single person who would agree with releasing Tymoshenko from prison. I felt sad about that, but I would never call those people bloodthirsty. Established European democracies have checks-and-balances mechanisms that prevent rulers from getting so much at large as to become subject to detainment by the next government, and even there this does not always work. So let's not compare this with the Eastern Partnership area. Internal and external views on what is happening in a country can hardly be reconciled completely, and not everything fits into what is written in textbooks.

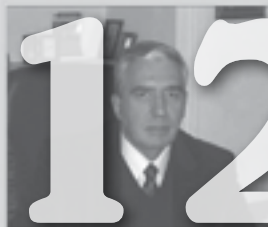
# Virtual Universe Keeps Turning into a Dynamo

By GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI | MARCH 5, 2012

• Intellectual Obsession or Political Habit?  
• Misunderstanding that Georgia will not  
Facilitate a Solution

# 2012

President Saakashvili in his recent address to the Parliament referred to the entire opposition as ones locked in a virtual world who have completely lost touch with reality. Interestingly, the ruling team has crafted a virtual reality of another nature, one that manifests itself to an outsider as a mysterious noumenon, Ding an-und-fur Sich (following Immanuel Kant: "by and for itself"), writes George Khutsishvili, director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation.



George Khutsishvili is director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation.

A sourcerer's stone carefully calculated and allowing them to survive and strengthen against all odds. The "Rose Revolution" was hoped to create a chance of securing the transition to democracy. This hope has long evaporated. Never since regaining of independence has there been a greater alienation between the power and the people; yet figures show that all the discontent always happens

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, Democracy & Freedom Watch, March 5, 2012.

and figures show that all the discontent always happens within a minor fraction of society, thus forging an illusion that the ruling party is strongly supported by the majority of people.

## VIRTUAL UNIVERSE KEEPS TURNING INTO A DYNAMO

President Saakashvili in his recent address to the Parliament referred to the entire opposition as ones locked in a virtual world who have completely lost touch with reality. Interestingly, the ruling team has crafted a virtual reality of another nature, one that manifests itself to an outsider as a mysterious noumenon, Ding an-und-fur Sich (following Immanuel Kant: "by and for itself"), writes George Khutsishvili, director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation.

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After the presidential address to parliament February 28, there is practically no question left about expectability of the "formal

transition of power” mentioned by President Obama. Anyone can explicitly derive this from Mikheil Saakashvili’s speech. After almost two full terms in power, he does not even express himself in normally expectable forms like “the next team in power will continue and build on what we have done”, thus leaving a space for a fair judgment, or say, “whoever the Georgian people will choose to elect will complete the reforms”. On the contrary, power instinct apparently dictates that whatever is publicly said should not leave a chance of liberal, pluralistic or inclusive interpretation. What should resonate in people’s ears is a clear message that not only the same policies will be protracted indefinitely into future, but also by the same people in power. After having had this pattern repeat itself for years, shouldn’t the West finally hear the bell ringing that these guys are no democrats and do not intend to build a democratic state?

Reacting to remarks from the parliamentary opposition, Mikheil Saakashvili once again confirmed he cannot react to criticism in a form appropriate for a leading statesman. Praising his team for the huge progress in developing the culture of political debate, he at the same time calls an opposition MP “a clown” and promises to drench him ‘in healing mud’. Similar outrages have happened too many times to appear as a slip of the tongue. It is rather a policy of “we do what we will, and no one in the world can stop us”.

Another tell-tailing scene was a long and overwhelming applause with everyone standing up – a *déjà vu* of the Brezhnev times – after a session that should have caused grave questions instead. Many of us have already been through times when truth, justice and progress were all the monopoly of one party, and everyone was left with a choice of joining in, or being marginalized. Is not the same happening here and now? We are dealing with an outrageous and extreme case, to which the outside reaction is also outrageously weak and sluggish. What is the mystery behind this?

The gimmick has been based on comparison to a worse case against the level of global urgency. Relativism was a key to success: anywhere in the Caucasus we have a hindered democratic transition, and Georgia looks better off compared to Armenia or

Azerbaijan. Yes, it is seriously short of qualifying as a “beacon of democracy”, but who else does? There are long lists of states more and less democratic than Georgia, so why raise hell if it creates no direct threats to larger-scale stability? After all, it’s people’s choice to live with or fight against authoritarianism. As clever people like Fukuyama wrote, democracy cannot be imposed from the outside, it has to grow from within. At least, when the age of “color revolutions” seems past.

A supporting stabilizing factor has been a mass mentality easily thrown into a nihilistic mode. While the Arab Spring has proven that even in countries with traditionally long-lived dictatorial regimes, millions can be mobilized via social networks to trigger political change; any petition or appeal in Georgia does not collect more than a few hundred signatures. Again, an outside observer may deduce from this that any declared mass protest has really little support.

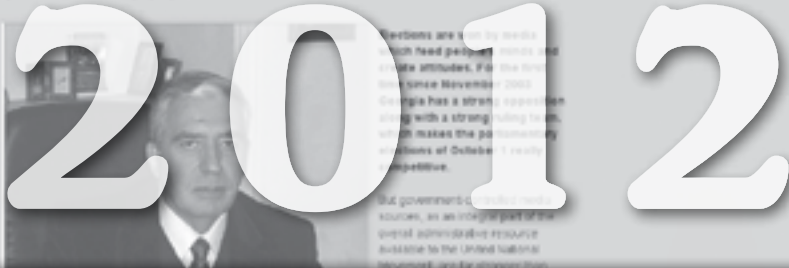
Two inconsistencies interact and finally synergize: both a Georgian layman and a development-providing international bureaucrat would rather prefer to remain low key or murmur in the background about their discontent with the current situation and the necessity of change, and refrain from publicly confirming their opinion. In the Georgian case, this works even for anonymous polls widely advertized domestically and abroad, further strengthening the once gained momentum. There is a lot of talk about the intimidation and total surveillance, yet can Georgians be seen as more intimidated than people under some Asian totalitarian regimes where they quite recently achieved a change by speaking up?

As soon as a critical mass of outspoken protest is reached, it both facilitates changes domestically, and fosters changes in international reactions. I am not sure this will happen already in 2012, but some day it will. In a society with an overwhelming unemployment issue, it may also take the form of a nationalistic upheaval. Hopefully it will not take the form of brutal and ruthless aggression against all, as soon as the ruling regime gets tired some day.



## Will there be civil confrontation?

By GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI | Sep 29, 2012



By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, Democracy & Freedom Watch, September 29, 2012.

TV channels prevail or are the only ones available. Formally defined as private commercial media sources, they consistently provide a biased and partisan picture of events favorable for the ruling party and discrediting the opposition.

## WILL THERE BE CIVIL CONFRONTATION?

Elections are won by media which feed people's minds and create attitudes. For the first time since November 2003 Georgia has a strong opposition along with a strong ruling team, which makes the parliamentary elections of October 1 really competitive.

But government-controlled media sources, as an integral part of the overall administrative resource available to the United National Movement, are far stronger than anything Bidzina Ivanishvili's billions may use or create to backfire. The pre-election playing field is therefore not level, and the disproportion is obvious: the capital city has the opportunity to switch channels and see both perspectives, while in the rural areas and urban centers the government-controlled TV channels prevail or are the only ones available. Formally defined as private commercial media sources, they consistently provide a biased and partisan picture of events favorable for the ruling party and discrediting the opposition.

After the horrifying videos of prison torture and rape that shattered anyone who watched them, the government decided to avert the blow and further counter-attack by means of a tested method:

launching smear materials – this time tapped phone conversations of leaders of the opposition Georgian Dream coalition – allegedly provided by Ivanishvili’s bodyguard who subsequently disappears from the scene. The leaked phone conversations are incomparable in their testifying force with the prison torture tapes, but they are used to convince people that the opposition has ties to a criminal world and an internal faction that is allegedly already splitting the opposition. Neither allegation sounds convincing, but the media effect is achieved. Most importantly, this televised war further polarizes the already split society.

It will be difficult to rig these elections, but it still looks like any result of the elections will be contested. Measurements of public opinion do not predict an overwhelming victory of any of the parties. At the same time, both parties are orientated only to victory, and any result short of this will not satisfy them. After the shocking prison tapes, the protest wave further strengthened the opposition, and their supporters are now expecting a victory which they are ready to defend by all possible means. However, the behavior of the president and his team does not presuppose that they may acknowledge the opposition’s success. As it looks now, they would rather use intimidation and administrative resources — especially in the provinces — to reduce the number of votes in favor of the opposition to a minimum, in order to demonstrate their domination again.

And what may happen if the opposition exceeds the limits of success tolerable for the government, is hard to predict. Possible destructive consequences cannot be ruled out.

# Intellectual Dilemma or Political Hoax?

DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM WATCH / MARCH 3, 2013

# 2013

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, Democracy & Freedom Watch, March 3, 2013.

## INTELLECTUAL DILEMMA OR POLITICAL HOAX?

*“Georgia? What kind of place is that?”*

*“Well, this is a post-Soviet country where a pro-Russian billionaire won the elections over a pro-Western reformer president...”*

That is a tag line that has already appeared in many foreign publications on Georgia, including Russian, but mostly US and EU based. It threatens to turn into a fairytale and an easily digestible media pill for the international layman. But it is actually wrong, as it turns out. For someone who commits him-/herself to a longer reading, it becomes clear that the new leader’s so-called “pro-Russian policies” are in fact just the first steps to climb out of a frozen gap between the two neighboring states, and that the “pro-Western reforms” of the outgoing leader did not necessarily lead the country to a more democratic state of things. Thus, the situation in Georgia is not so easily labeled the way the busy international mass media would normally prefer. But not all readers commit themselves to a

longer reading. And tags, once they have clung, are very difficult to remove. Especially if they are constantly and purposefully fueled, like mantras that gain meaning by frequent repetition. Still, the question arises of why some tags are so difficult to disprove or even modify? Usually, the reason lies in the deceptive self-evidence of some underlying “universal” assumptions. E.g. that an oligarch cannot by definition be a democratic leader.

The opposition United National Movement’s actions dwell on some “state of nature” postulates about power, sovereignty and international relations.

The first tacit assumption is that the Cold War is not over yet. The second and riskier one is that a small country can turn into a big actor by adding fuel to the struggle between the Poles. The third is that Russia is incommunicable and non-negotiable by definition, so you may comfortably forget about diplomacy, and only cry for protection.

Who could doubt such a convincing chain of thought? A corollary is drawn from the postulates above that it can only be a bluff to say that relations with Russia can be normalized while staying a strategic ally with the West. And The Daily Beast would easily believe it. It has been clear that leaders having an incompatibly different psychological make-up would not possibly cohabit. The new government of Georgia has declared in many ways it was not going to enter in a PR race with a more skillful opponent – to the extent of not making disclaimers or clarifications on wrongly interpreted facts – and would rather leave the judgment to an observer of tomorrow who will witness and register who was right and who was wrong.

As it happens, in the same time-frame, mantras turn into labels, and labels may finally turn into Wikipedia entries, if they are not timely attended to.

Dr. George Khutsishvili

combines the profiles of a scholar and practitioner in conflict resolution, and is also known as a political analyst. He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Ukraine Academy of Sciences (1991) and The State University (1977), taught conflict, terrorism and international conflicts at The State University and the University of Georgia. Dr. Khutsishvili is a co-author and editor of numerous books and articles. With support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation he founded in 1994 and currently directs the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia. In the mid-1990s Dr. Khutsishvili initiated and coordinated from the Georgian side the first Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue program and immediately after the August war of 2008 initiated a dialogue program with the Russian side. He is also a well-known

2013

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Tbilisi, Georgia, Published in "The South Caucasus 2018: Facts, Trends, Future Scenarios" by The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), 2013.

## THE RECIPROCAL IMPACT OF UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS ON THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRACY BUILDING – GEORGIA IN THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

This article was started and finalized after the October 1, 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia that have marked the transition from one conceptual framework and one political ideology, which had developed and shaped during eight years since the so-called "Rose Revolution", to another, which is only vaguely outlined at the moment, and has yet to be defined and implemented. It reflects the deep disappointment Georgian people had with what I call the policies of purposeful deadlock that entailed the quest for opportunities with new people in power. That is also why different scenarios of short-, medium- and long-term development have to be reconsidered but do not become easier to formulate.

## **ETHNO-TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND THEIR IMPACT ON DEMOCRATIC STATE-BUILDING**

The political situation in the South Caucasus is marked by unresolved conflicts, an underdeveloped state of democracy, and, as a result, a lack of stability and security in the region. In Georgia's case, unresolved conflicts, complicated relations with Russia and the seceded territories represent a major counter-indication for a more pronounced and efficient European integration process. Deficiency of democratic institutions and of respect for human rights represents an even more serious obstacle. The foremost among major factors creating a combined insecurity effect on a regional scale is the continuing Azerbaijani-Armenian confrontation over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

Unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus, as well as the state of democracy in the region have been studied in numerous works. However, the interrelation of these two topics and especially the impact of the former on the latter have been understudied. The paper aims to make a step towards filling this gap by undertaking a study of the versatile impact of unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus (mostly focusing on Abkhazia and South Ossetia cases, and on Georgia-Russia relations) on the process and the prospect of democracy-building both in the regional states and the unrecognized republics, and the region as a whole. The regional security issues, reasonable neighborhood policies and the prospect of Euro- and Euro-Atlantic integration of the South Caucasus states, as well as their sustainable development in general largely depend on realistic assessment of interrelationship between and interdependence of democracy and conflict. Apart from commonly known patterns of mutual alienation, stereotypization of perceptions, enemy image making etc., the case of the Caucasus reveals the patterns that repeat or resemble those of various other regions. However, the Caucasus also creates a pattern of its own.

There are two distinct parts of the Caucasus region on a geopolitical map. The entities constituting North-Caucasus area of Russian

Federation have been developing in a common and interconnected post-Soviet environment, while three South Caucasus countries – Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia – maintaining different levels of attachment to the rest of post-Soviet space, developed as independent sovereign states experiencing the effects of globalization and operating in an open system of international relations. On the other hand, Georgia and Azerbaijan have regions that have seceded and therefore did not participate in their mainstream development and have had much closer interdependence and interconnection with other neighboring post-Soviet countries: in Georgian cases Abkhazia and South Ossetia have had close affiliation to Russia, and especially the Russian North-Caucasus area, and in Azerbaijani case Nagorno-Karabakh affiliated with Armenia, and to a certain extent to Russia. Formally positioning themselves as independent states, Abkhazia and South Ossetia plainly identify with the Russian North-Caucasus area, considering themselves part of it not only culturally and ethnically, but also geopolitically, and Nagorno Karabakh identifies with Armenia. Prolonged periods of isolation and dis-attachment caused by the conflict resulted in alienation of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, from respectively, Azerbaijan and Georgia. That has shaped a peculiar perception of the external world, in which Abkhazians, South Ossetians and Nagorno-Karabakhis feel ethno-culturally much closer to the post-Soviet area than Azerbaijanis, Georgians or Armenians who have effectively transcended post-Soviet identity and seek to further develop as national states that aspire to establish their distinct place and role in a world of modernity if not yet post-modernity.

Unresolved conflicts have deeply influenced mentality and mass consciousness of Georgians. The wide-spread syndrome of a defeated nation formed traumatically in the beginning of 1990s, slowly subsided since and was revitalized again in August of 2008. A Kosovo precedent and Saakashvili's surprise attack on South Osset capital Tskhinvali on August 7, 2008 encouraged Russia to finalize its preferred configuration in the region at the expense of cutting off the already fragile ties with Georgia and further deepening the

embittered feelings of its people. The situation was ideally locked again by Putin's resolution not to talk to Saakashvili and Saakashvili's respective formula "First de-occupation, then the dialogue". Almost the whole world supported Georgia in non-recognition of the seceded autonomies, but no dynamics followed, and the security situation did not improve.

This has shaped a pattern of relationships between citizen and citizen, citizen and state, state and neighbor states, a world of kin and a wider world, "us" and "them", demanding to restore the country's territorial integrity and placing hard responsibility on the governments in that respect. When conflicts remain "frozen" for almost two decades, long-term consequences become clearer, objectively giving the opportunity to the rulers to become more authoritarian and explain it as a necessary response to a social demand. The "rationale" of the rulers sounds as follows. No time for liberalism and pluralism when the war is not yet finished, parts of the country are alienated and there is the risk to lose even more. Confidence-building looks as a logical answer, when no official diplomacy has so far been successful. But what sense does it make to speak with the seceded communities or their de facto rulers if they are totally dependent on their patrons in Russia? They are thus not really parties to conflict, but derivatives from the only real "other side" – Russia. Okay, a question may rise: then you need to develop dialogue with Russia, don't you? The answer is: Wait a minute, but does it make sense to speak with Russia? What kind of dialogue can be between a huge empire and its former small colony that it seeks to return to its sphere of influence?

In Georgia's case, the really existing external threat from Russia has been raised to the level of irrational, picturing an opponent as incommunicable, non-negotiable and insatiable in its effort to totally destroy and absorb Georgia's independent statehood at all costs. Be that so, no bilateral diplomacy can work by definition and the only possible pattern of behavior is to seek protection within a strong military alliance of civilized nations, such as NATO. As this scenario is also not materializing, the deadlock becomes complete.



Seeing this, the world appeals to the sides to start the dialogue without preconditions as soon as possible. Okay, the rulers say, we are ready for such a dialogue, but it is the other side who is blocking it. Looking at this vicious circle, average Georgian's mindset can only perceive the issue of restoration of the country's territorial integrity at a remote and abstract plane, while actors involved and movements done are perceived in a Kafka style where people seek unrealistic goals, the government shouts at a remote and overwhelming opponent who does not seem to hear but occasionally makes disastrous moves, the international community makes impotent statements and appeals for the impossible, and the resulting theater of absurd becomes a kind of *modus vivendi* for everyone involved. In a changed reality since October 2012, developments are expected in Georgian policies towards Russia and the seceded regions that should also make the international community redress its attitudes towards the Georgian issues to support initiatives and proactive steps to overcome the post-August status quo.

What kind of effect does the prolonged status quo and absence of communication do to an unresolved issue? Will there more or less opportunities appear, as the time passes? On the one hand, there is an objective need for de-isolation of the secessionist regions, and the government at a declarative level adhered to approaches that substantiated this need. On the other, we have seen the actual policies that deepened isolation and increased security risks. Russia has achieved as a result of the August 2008 war its major geopolitical goals in the regions; its military presence has been reestablished after withdrawal of the bases according to the bilateral agreement signed in Moscow in May 2005. The longer the stalemate lasts, the more it means vanishing chances for Georgia to reverse the situation any time in future.

There are definite features that make the South Caucasus conflict-related situations, conflict-affected areas and the respective communities similar, comparable though different from each other. There are also similarities and differences in the policies chosen, declared or practiced by the regional powers. For instance, since

the State Strategy towards the Occupied Territories was adopted in January 2010 by the Georgian government, “engagement without recognition” had been the declared state policy supported by the international community. However, failure or unwillingness to “engage” in the dialogue with the secessionist communities and regimes hindered the processes initiated by the civil society groups and known as track-two diplomacy.

Without sustaining the declared policy of non-recognition with engagement, Georgia is risking to encourage and ensure the final recognition, at least, in case of Abkhazia. The only viable alternative would require abandoning of the antagonistic rhetoric towards Russia, followed by the start of Georgia-Russia dialogue on a wide spectrum of issues, followed by real engagement and de-isolation policies of the Georgian state towards the seceded regions, and the subsequent confidence atmosphere achieved between the sides. Such a vision of “engagement without recognition” is shared by practically all external stakeholders, but the problem is that they do not see a motivation for themselves to invest an increased effort towards its realization.

The post-war status quo imposed by the overwhelming third party (as in the case of Russia-Georgia five-day war in August 2008) or prolonged standoff between comparable parties (such as Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh) feed strong-hand regimes and justify maintenance of underdeveloped state of democracies. Manipulation of the image of external threat and maintenance of status quo reveal themselves as “smart power” tools (the cases of Azerbaijani-Armenian and Georgia-Russia confrontation) in the hands of power holders. Real and virtual roles of third parties in conflict development may be distinguished: e.g. virtual Russia in Georgian government-controlled mass media propaganda and public perception, and virtual Georgia in Russian mass media and public perception.

Unresolved conflicts prompt the regimes to grow authoritarian, they impose uncompromising stance on the governments toward the issues that cannot be resolved without a compromise. Most

Georgians accept that communication with Abkhaz and Ossets needs to be kept alive, or otherwise the alienation will be complete. The issue in Georgian discourse is not legitimacy of the dialogue, but its feasibility, while in Azerbaijan legitimacy of a bilateral dialogue with Karabakhis is under a big question mark. Apart from what arguments are usually brought to explain this, the pragma behind it is that Abkhazia may go astray – it has a common border with Russia and access to sea – while Karabakh cannot go anywhere, and Azerbaijanis just need to be patient until historical conditions appear to facilitate the restoration of the country's jurisdiction over its seceded part. So Georgians feel like talking with Abkhaz is needed but very difficult to materialize, while Azerbaijanis feel they may not bother to talk to Karabakhis. A risky strategy, but inevitably gaining a foothold while the leaders consolidate their power via frozen conflict. In the Georgian case, the opportunity of freezing the conflict within a post-August status quo framework had been utilized to a full swing by the Saakashvili's Government, and the Russian policy was quite in concert with this. Not that Russia, unlike Georgia, risked any stake in that process<sup>1</sup>.

It is noteworthy that whenever an election period approached, or political struggle in the country reached a high point, the NATO issue was activated in the Georgian internal political discourse, presumably, to strengthen hopes that the current government was able to speed up the Euro-Atlantic integration process or just to steer the public opinion from current affairs to a brighter future ahead. NATO membership was considered to be a defense mechanism against Russia, an eternal and unmanageable threat to Georgia's existence, according to the government propaganda. Although hardly anyone believes that the NATO membership is achievable in near future, and even if such a decision was made due to extraordinary geopolitical circumstances, a decision in NATO to protect Georgia against

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<sup>1</sup> Khutsishvili, George, "Contemporary Russia-Georgia Relations: The Orwellian Power Phenomenon in 21<sup>st</sup> century", in George Khutsishvili and Tina Gogueliani, eds. *Russia and Georgia: the Ways out of the Crisis*. Tbilisi: ICCN-GPPAC, 2010.

an external aggression would have to be made upon a consensus of 28 member states, which renders it almost impossible.

For an authoritarian ruler, an overwhelming external threat is not something that you try to mitigate or prevent or manage, but rather something that you seek to maintain, caress and foster to be able to use it as a stick in your struggle against domestic political opponents, and to manipulate the external environment to your interest. Even at the risk of increasing risks and propagating the threats for your country and beyond. The U.S., NATO, the West have been objects of external manipulation and tools for internal intimidation for the Russian leadership, as it has been for all autocracies in Asia, Africa or Latin America, as well as Belarus. What the West is portrayed to be for Russia, the same Russia appears to be for Georgia (and further on, Georgia for Abkhazia and South Ossetia). In that sense, there is nothing different in how the picture of confrontation is substantiated or used: if Russia did not exist, it should have been invented.

To summarize this section, we may conclude that unresolved conflicts cause:

- Growth of authoritarian tendencies in regional powers (governments are prompted to show a tough and uncompromising stance, rather than demonstrate an open and inclusive approach; temptation grows to legitimize bureaucratic trends and limitation of human rights by necessity of strong state and prevention of destabilization; unitary state is seen as a goal and federalism is a swear word);

- Strengthening of nationalist attitudes in a divided society and anti-Western sentiment at the level of disappointment or frustration (while European integration is the declared goal of the conflict-affected South Caucasus countries, there is frustration caused by the long-term effects of international involvement with its declarative approach and appeals to both sides to collaborate);

- Excessive focus on development of power structures and military capacities allegedly needed to confront possible external aggression but also used as demonstration of force in internal politics;

- Fragmented views on democratic development and nihilism towards democracy as a feasible goal; growing disbelief in the system of values that the West considers to be fundamental for modern civil nation-building and the establishment of democracy;

- Hampered democratic institution-building in regional states (excess power concentrated in a head of state; impaired or ineffective balance between executive, legislative and juridical power branches; lack of checks-and-balances mechanisms and accountability of government before the society);

- Fragile state of national and regional security (absence of peace and non-use of force agreements between sides, foreign military bases and troops stationed in conflict zones and adjacent territories, human security issues and incidents happening along Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) enhance security anxiety and predictions of renewal of hostilities);

- Hampered or frozen confidence-building between the parties to conflict (non-willingness to develop direct communication with de facto authorities of secessionist regions; in Georgia's case, announcement of Russia as a sole adversary in the conflict and neglect of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as parties to conflict; neglect of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan's case);

- Transference of responsibility on third parties (Russia was always seen as a main perpetrator of the conflicts in the Caucasus, and since August 2008 is officially seen as the only party to conflict with Georgia; the role of national liberation movement leaders in late 1980s and early 1990s, and subsequent mistakes and wrong approaches are generally mitigated and blurred);

- Hampered process of integration of the regional states into a larger community of developed states and the international collective security structures (delayed international agreements on regime facilitation in different directions, such as visa-free regime and free trade; in Georgia's case this is also a delay in getting a Membership Action Plan (MAP) considered to be a green light before a country is officially announced as a candidate to NATO membership).

Democracy is often measured by the degree of civil society development, human rights protection, freedom of mass media, pluralistic political environment, etc. Symptomatic for all South Caucasus ruling elites is inadequate assessment of the civil society in their countries, underestimation and rejection of opportunities to cooperate with the independent NGO sector in tackling the issues of critical importance (comparison may be made with some African states, e.g. Kenya and Ghana, where state-sponsored peace commissions have been created to deal with post-conflict challenges with participation of both governmental and civil society leaders). Necessity to develop infrastructures for peace (I4P) in the Caucasus region is obvious, but the regional state actors in our region are reluctant to do so in their countries. Here again, lack of democracy creates obstacles for conflict transformation/resolution.

Lack of democracy, in its turn, causes:

- Inability of the titular nations of regional states to come to consensus about the causes of conflict and acknowledge their own share in development of conflict;

- Inability to develop a vision of how to prevent or overcome crises in society (in an extreme case, generation of purposeful deadlocks and crises as tools in internal political struggle);

- Inability to develop and pursue strategies towards confidence-building and bridging of the gaps in communication between the sides;

- Exaggerated influence of radical positions in societies about solvability of conflicts and the necessary concessions the titular nations need to make.

Factors preventing the South Caucasus nations from rapidly covering the distance to an established democracy:

- Growingly authoritarian model of rule, incompatible with pluralism, accountability and the division of powers;

- Recent totalitarian past with limited freedom of speech and expression, one-party rule, fictitious elections and dependent judiciary prompt people – especially middle and older generation – to

skepticism towards feasibility of democratic institutions and value-based state system;

- More recent experience of repeated and unaccounted election fraud deepen disbelief in change of power through elections;

- Lack of experience of living under the conditions of open society, market economy and free media is not helpful for developing self-organization and collective civil forms of protest; it also prevents civil society organizations from proliferating their values and ideas in wider circles of population;

- Fragmentation of society caused by recent war and conflict traumas strengthens ethnic phobias and xenophobic prejudices, which, along with social hardships and inefficient social management produces a particularly painful outcome in a traditionally multi-ethnic and diverse community of people;

- Selective justice and unequal opportunities for representatives and supporters of the ruling party, on the one hand, and the rest of society, on the other, in doing and developing business, finding qualified jobs in a public sphere, defending and restoring their rights vs the state, escaping responsibility and punishment in cases of perpetration of law create a depressive effect in the country;

- Revival of a nomenclature-style government and one-party rule breeds nihilism, discourages young people from seeking to build their future in their home country, deprives them of hope to find implementation for their potential in Georgia;

- Skillful manipulation by the governmental propaganda of stereotypes, nihilist attitudes, virtual and actual fears in a fragmented society breed conspiratorial mindsets, mystify the existing external threats, denigrate the political opposition as bearers of alien values and promoters of Russian imperial interest in Georgia;

- Wide-spread present poverty, unemployment and failed social programming, combined with hailing of the Georgian reforms by the West spread disbelief in Western liberal values and sincerity of the West's declared support for the country's development.

Factors preventing the West from objectively assessing and adequately reacting to the situation in South Caucasus states:

- Low place of Georgia and Armenia in the scale of strategic interests of superpowers, dependence of Armenia on Russia;
- Rich natural resources of Azerbaijan;
- Pro-Western reputation of the team in power since the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia.

### **THE PHENOMENON OF GEORGIA-RUSSIA CONFRONTATION**

An interstate problem often starts as what is or seems to be an incident, then turns into a conflict, and finally may turn into a pillar of a nation’s self-concept, usually affecting mentality of a smaller and more vulnerable nation. This can hardly happen between Armenia and Azerbaijan, or generally between comparable actors, but has already happened between Turkey and Armenia. For many Armenians the concept of genocide of 1915 and perception of Turks as perpetrators of genocide prevents normalization of relations, as this would mean turning upside down their self-concept that upholds the national identity idea (for the sake of comparison, for Jews the problem of the holocaust was not so centered on Germans after the Second World War, but was perceived as a latest stage of a history-long persecution and oppression experienced from different bigger actors). Now the same pattern is discoverable in the Georgia-Russia case, only this time it is a constructed one.

The current Russia-Georgia relations contain so many singularities, contradictions and such an enormous degree of subjectivity that they are undoubtedly phenomenal. Yet they may also be called phenomenal in the sense that goes back to a Kantian tradition, according to which phenomenon is the thing how it appears to us, as opposed to noumenon which is the thing as it is in itself (Ding-an-sich). There are distinct and significantly different pictures of Russia-Georgia relations in Georgia, in Russia, and in that part of the external world that has some knowledge and interest towards what is happening between the two countries. It can also be seen



that phenomenality of Russia-Georgia relations shows itself in a most salient way where the incompatibilities are concerned. To the extent that the suspicion rises whether the entire confrontation is more of a carefully constructed hoax than a geopolitical reality.

It is well known that Russia played a key role in developments related to the conflicts in Georgia. The main stages may be picked out: 1992-2004; 2004-2008; 2008-present. The Caucasus conflicts were linked with dissolution of the Soviet Union by the end of 1980s, the rise of ethno-nationalism, and Moscow's attempt to maintain power and influence over the provinces that were moving away. When ethnic wars broke out and the world had to appoint custodians of peace, it was clear from the start that Russia was a disputable broker, as it had a too much visible interest invested in the conflict. Yet nobody seemed to notice that, as Russia seemed to be the only viable actor in that part of the world at that time, and dealing directly with rogue states and uncontrolled territories made no one happy.

Saakashvili's Government created the much disputed conception of non-transformability of Georgia-Russia relations. Saakashvili and his team were trying to persuade everyone that Russia is not swallowing Georgia only because they have created a defense wall against it. They had been positioning themselves as the only and uniquely bright, far-sighted and patriotic team who constantly had to fight not only against external threats and challenges, but also against internal agents of influence and fifth columns operating under the disguise of political opposition and their supporters. Therefore one-party rule and marginalization of the opponents should have found legitimization. It is amazing how the external world would buy this story without raising serious questions, yet it is a fact that it did.

Things had developed so that the Russia-Georgia standoff looked irresolvable, generating in the population of Georgia both fears of future and disbelief that the conflict issues would have found a rational solution any time in future. There has been a lot of effort applied to make it look like that. The changed situation in Georgian

parliament and government opens new opportunities. Georgia has an issue in changing the post-August status quo. Russia theoretically has the key to the settlement, but practically has little incentive to use it. Russia has achieved its basic goals by securing its southern borders with buffer zones and restoring its military presence in Georgia as a result of a five-day war in August 2008. What is the price Georgia will be offered to pay to advance towards realization of its national project?

### **THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE 2012 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENTS IN GEORGIA AND IN THE REGION**

2013

Through competitive elections with a high voter turnout Georgia for the first time in its post-Soviet history of independent statehood has a parliament representing two major existing political forces – the Georgian Dream coalition led by the businessman and philanthropist Bidzina Ivanishvili (54 percent of votes) and Saakashvili's United National Movement (41 percent) – dividing the 150 total seats in the highest legislative body of the country into, respectively, 83 and 67 seats on either side. The myth of inevitably weak opposition vis-à-vis Saakashvili's team that had been nurtured through the eight post-“rose-revolution” years is finally destroyed.

Strong opposition cannot just appear out of the blue. It needs to build and mature and develop in years, and the government needs to support this growth and development. This process has taken a longer time-frame in Georgia, and the question frequently asked was if this was inevitable or a result of a purposeful policy. Even appearance of a particularly wealthy person as an opposition leader cannot change the scene overnight. When the government prevents and blocks through many years any private contributions or donations that might support growth of opposition and finally – 29 December 2011 – passes a law that places unbearable burden on any financial activity of opposition in front of the elections and intimidates anyone who might wish to express support to it, it is

difficult to expect miraculous results. Yet the result that followed the elections had an astounding effect on the society long-accustomed to a nihilist attitude towards elections as such.

There are practically two more possible outcomes of the October 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia. The first and objectively positive one would mark the end to the one-party domination stage in Georgian politics and the start of a more pluralistic one by establishing a strong parliamentary majority able to compete with the strong opposition and elaborate the viable decision-making process. The other and objectively negative would entail dissolution of the winning coalition into smaller competing groups, thus enabling Saakashvili's group to reverse the situation, although unlikely to ever regain the constitutional majority (now raised to three-fourths from two-thirds of 150 seats) in the hands of UNM, thus giving a stimulus to further authoritarian trend in power and throwing the country back in its development and aspirations.

Does the prospect of Russia-Georgia relations depend dramatically on the outcome of the October 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia? Pro-Russian turn and deviation from the current pro-Western course was vehemently predicted by the ruling UNM party and its leader President Saakashvili in case the opposition would win or even get a strong representation in the Parliament. This in fact an overstatement unsupported by objective data has been nevertheless replicated in much of the world media sources. Of course, there would be changes in external policies, mainly in regard to Russia and the unresolved conflicts, but not for pro-Western and Euro-Atlantic orientation the consensus on a vital importance of which is country-wide. There is no evidence at the same time that Ivanishvili would use his position in power to submit the country's interest to Russian or any other external interest that would challenge the national interest or status of Georgia as an independent state.

What kind of consequences may the Georgian election results have on the regional situation?

If we consider the regional context for Georgia as including Russia, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran, i.e. wider than the Caucasus proper, we see that political developments in Georgia may significantly impact situation in the regional neighborhood and even generate new transnational projects. Progress in Georgia-Russia relations, mitigation of the existing standoff and especially a breakthrough in economic aspect will cause positive dynamics in Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Osset directions, giving rise to the ideas of new transport corridors across the Caucasus, linking Russia to Turkey via Georgia, which would inevitably include the territory of Abkhazia and this would require a certain progress achieved in Georgian-Abkhazian relations to be materialized. A serious obstacle to development and materialization of these plans would be Moscow's insistence on Georgia's acknowledging independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a precondition, which would mean bringing things back to stalemate again.

The victory of Obama in the presidential election in the US in November 2012 may give an impetus to revitalizing the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement dialogue at some point, yet development of economic relations and subsequent visa facilitation between Turkey and Armenia have much more prospect than a breakthrough via direct negotiations involving such sensitive issues as recognition of genocide or territorial disputes.

Another dimension of developments touches upon the Iranian issue, although history shows that development in and around Iran have less impact on developments in the post-Soviet area of the Caucasus.

Getting back to the South Caucasus political processes, the already established Georgian example of peaceful transition of power to opposition through elections breaks the previously unified picture of the Caucasus that was exemplified by crackdowns on opposition during the elections of October 2003 in Azerbaijan, November 2007 in Georgia and March 2008 in Armenia with subsequent consolidation of power within authoritarian systems. If confirmed by post-election democratic processes, the Georgian counter-example

may impact seriously the developments in other South Caucasus states.

**Short-term sketches (2-3 years):**

- Development of dialogue between Georgia and Russia may start, causing economic relations to develop, resulting in confidence-building programs with Abkhaz and Osset societies to develop and signing of non-use of force agreements with de facto authorities to take place, but the status quo will remain;
- Russia will not succeed in raising international support for the independent status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and may subsequently submit to the necessity of taking a neutral stance towards Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Osset dialogue;
- Turkey will grow in its role as a regional power. Turkey will develop partnership with Russia but not liaise with Russia; there rather will be a division of the spheres of influence;
- Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the meanwhile may further deteriorate, periodically raising fears of the renewal of hostilities, which would however keep at low-intensity level, not flinging into a full-scale armed confrontation.

**Medium-term sketches (5-10 years):**

- Most difficult to predict! Most plausibly this may be a prolongation of the short-term developments.

**Long-term sketches (15-25 years):**

- Under the pressure of new economic and geopolitical realities an active conflict transformation process may start in Georgia and later in Azerbaijan, causing the unrecognized republics to participate in advantageous transnational projects that require cooperation with the recognized states, leading to finally shaping of a common legal space;
- Regional power configurations may develop; one scenario that cannot be totally dismissed is the South Caucasus con-

federation (3+3 model) that could start to take shape under international aegis.

Being currently close to one extreme – disintegrated Caucasus with insecure borders, occupied territories, seceded regions and undeveloped democratic institutions – we could also think of the other, a desirable “extreme”, a peaceful, integrated, developed and prosperous Caucasus, something like a mini-EU to shape in the long-run.

# 2013

By George Khutsishvili, Andrey Ryabov, Published in *Creating Spaces for Dialogue: A role for Civil Society*; Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), Dialogue and Mediation Series, Issue #1, 2015.

## THE ISTANBUL PROCESS: A DIALOGUE OF GEORGIAN AND RUSSIAN POLITICAL EXPERTS

Soon after the five-day war that broke out in 2008 with disastrous consequences for Georgia, in a political context averse to such initiatives, the idea of an unbiased dialogue between high-profile independent experts of Russia and Georgia emerged.

The goal of the initiative was to find out how Georgia and Russia came to find themselves in the present situation, how we could overcome it, and what potential scenarios we should expect in short-, medium- and long-term perspectives. Consultations began between the experts. The expert dialogue was to result in joint recommendations to the political leadership of both countries. The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) readily supported the initiative of the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), which leads the regional network of GPPAC in the Caucasus, in developing such a dialogue. As it was impossible to conduct joint meetings of the experts either in Russia or in Georgia, Istanbul was selected as a neutral and opportune place for communications. The first meeting was held in early November

2008 and was followed by a total of nine meetings. The participants went on to fill the key positions in parliament and the government of Georgia after the change of power in October 2012. Later the entire endeavour was named the Istanbul Process, although meetings were also held in the USA and in Europe. The ICCN endeavour has entailed other initiatives and projects of the Georgian NGOs and expert groups, yet even now the Istanbul Process is known as the most famous, long-lived and continuous process of the Russia-Georgia expert dialogue.

The Istanbul Process commenced in the post-war situation when, of course, nobody could guarantee its sustainability. In the absence of diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia in the autumn of 2008, and in the context of information warfare, direct communication between the two countries and contacts at the level of institutions and organisations were interrupted. Importantly, the two countries on either side of the Caucasus Mountains lacked information of the current events of the other side.

In this context the project boiled down to solving a task which seemed simple at first sight but which was complex in terms of performance. As conveners of the dialogue, we needed to find representatives of civil society, such as political experts, analytical journalists and NGO activists, who would be interested in rebuilding normal relations between our countries. Potential participants would have to be ready for a dialogue seeking to understand what really occurred in the Georgia-Russia relations and how it could have happened. The aim was also to try to make suggestions towards re-establishing the relations between the two countries and people.

Although the first meetings were held in an open and confidential atmosphere, tension was still in the air, especially during the first meeting in November 2008. It was obvious that the consequences of the August conflict were not yet fully understood, the international situation around Russia-Georgia relations was highly strung, and the emotions about what had happened had not yet abated. During the discussions much attention was focused on the problems behind the origins of the war, as well as actions and responsibilities of the



parties involved. The situation gradually began to change as the process progressed: the focus of the discussion shifted from “what happened” to “what to do”. In this context the idea of developing a joint collection of articles on the reasons and consequences of the August war, written by both Russian and Georgian authors, was perhaps the best decision. The aim of the joint authorship was to show society and both governments that the war, despite the obvious negative effects, had not erased the relations between people, and that it was still possible to conduct a dialogue and make joint efforts for solving the problems.

The book “Russia and Georgia: The Ways out of the Crisis” was published in 2010<sup>1</sup>. By that time there were already several formats of the Russian-Georgian non-governmental dialogue. There were plans of issuing joint papers of Russian and Georgian experts. The book “Russia and Georgia: The Ways out of the Crisis”, published within the framework of the Istanbul Process, was the first to come out.

While the key participants from both Russian and Georgian sides remained involved, providing stability and continuity, a significant achievement of the Istanbul Process was the continuous inclusion of new people in the project. The expansion of the participants’ pool positively affected the space of the dialogue, and the dynamics of conversations started to transform allowing the discussion topics to become more practical and matter-of-fact. Additionally, new contacts and bilateral collaborations at a personal level enabled the participants from two sides of the conflict to engage outside the dialogue process. Moving beyond political experts to also include key media figures allowed opportunities for more frequent media engagement in the two countries.

In the spring and summer of 2012, the research teams of the ICCN and the Carnegie Moscow Centre, the project’s implementing partners, conducted a joint study on Russian and Georgian

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<sup>1</sup> George Khutsishvili and Tina Gogueliani, *Russia and Georgia. The Ways out of the Crisis*, (Tbilisi, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict & ICCN, 2010).

public opinion of the two countries using similar methodologies<sup>1</sup>. The study showed how the traditional stereotypes function under the present-day conditions and demonstrated the newly emerging trends. The participants began to effectively translate the benefits of interaction within the framework of the Istanbul Process into other formats, including their professional settings.

However, right until the Georgian parliamentary elections held in October 2012, a key component was missing in the implementation of the dialogue process: the access to power structures. It seemed that the governments of the two countries showed no interest in bridge-building. This in itself limited the efforts of civil society. The situation changed sharply after the new government of the Georgian Dream came to power and stated its intention to rebuild Georgia's relations with Russia. Such a change in the Russia-Georgia relations created an opportunity to use ideas that emerged from the dialogue discussions to be offered to the power structures.

Currently, the bilateral relations are changing dynamically. The number of contacts between Russian and Georgian civil societies is increasing and the relations between teams and organisations interested in communication are becoming more open. This, however, does not mean that the Istanbul Process has attained its goals. The Georgian-Russian dialogue is just drawing up its contours and probably will be developing in a very complex political context. As an umbrella project, the Istanbul Process will most likely serve and benefit new initiatives in different areas of Russia-Georgia cooperation. Furthermore, as the relations are entering a new phase of their existence, the process' participants will probably be challenged by the need to provide new ideas and new approaches.

The first reactions of the Russian officials to the signals on the changing policies in Georgia were discouraging, to say the least. At the same time, based on the agreement of the Georgian govern-

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<sup>1</sup> Perceptions of Georgia in Russian Society (Carnegie Moscow Centre, 2012); Perception of Russia and Russians in Georgian Society (International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, 2011).

ment with the Russian side, regular contact started in November of 2012 between the official representatives of the parties – Representative of the Georgian Prime Minister in Georgia-Russia Relations Zurab Abashidze (an active participant of the Istanbul Process prior to his appointment to this position) and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Grigoriy Karasin (who also acts as the co-chair of the Geneva Talks over Georgian conflicts). The negotiations at a governmental level enabled the achievement of progress and particular results in economic and cultural cooperation. Georgian wine, mineral waters and agricultural products, all popular among the Russian people, started to appear on the Russian market. Triumphant concerts of Georgian artists took place in Moscow. Georgian and Russian Orthodox Churches traditionally maintain their friendly relations, which did not cease even in the heaviest post-war context of confrontation and the information warfare. Georgian society expects an easing of the visa policy from the Russian side which will increase people-to-people contact across the border.

However, according to the participating analysts' assessment, the dialogue between the two countries' is developing slowly and inertly. Such a pace has its own reasons. There are red lines, pertaining to the post-August status quo, related to the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, that the parties cannot cross in the talks. According to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 26 August 2008, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were recognised as independent states and later on, despite the protests on the Georgian side, bilateral agreements on the military-political and economic cooperation were signed. As a reaction to Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia severed its diplomatic relations with Russia and declared the entire territory of the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia occupied territories of Georgia.

Despite Georgia's new policy towards Russia, the government of Georgia declared that diplomatic relations could not be re-established as long as Russia has its embassies in the capital cities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia also demanded Russia call back its resolution on the recognition of the two republics.

However, in the context of severed diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia, there are good chances of cooperation developing around humanitarian, cultural, economic and political areas. These areas of Russia-Georgia relations were addressed at an experts' meeting in Istanbul in November 2012, which was held after the Georgian parliamentary elections in October 2012. The discussions resulted in the following joint statement.

**Istanbul Process Joint Statement, November 16-17, 2012:**

Taking into account changing conditions and emerging opportunities, and based on the interests of both sides, the dialogue participants suggest the following steps towards the normalisation of Russia-Georgia relations. Realising that the process is rather extensive and complex, we consider it appropriate to focus on those key areas that ensure evident effect in the short term. In our common view, this could create preconditions for finding solutions to a number of issues affecting relations between our countries in humanitarian, cultural and economic spheres.

**As part of humanitarian and cultural areas it is appropriate:**

- To encourage contacts between socio-professional groups, particularly among youth groups;
- To restore communications in the field of science and education;
- To promote the development of expert cooperation in the form of regular consultations, particularly over the internet;
- To facilitate simplification of visa regulations for the citizens of Georgia until its complete elimination;
- To promote tourism development.

**In the sphere of economic relations:**

- In accordance with the norms and rules of the WTO, accelerate resolution of the issue of certification and approval of the Georgian agricultural and food products to the Russian market;

- To promote cross-border trade;
- To institutionalise economic and trade relations by opening representative offices of key economic ministries and agencies, commerce and trade chambers, as well as by creating a permanent round table of Georgian and Russian entrepreneurs.

**In the areas of politics and security:**

- To restore inter-parliamentarian and expert communication on important issues of regional security, including the crisis in the Middle East, as well as in the North and South Caucasus;
- To pay special attention to the fight against terrorism and religious extremism, particularly in light of ensuring security of Sochi 2014.

In our joint opinion, refraining from forms of rhetoric and negative stereotypes unacceptable to both sides, could contribute to the gradual process of normalisation of relations. We also believe that addressing a number of particularly complex problematic issues between the parties should be postponed for a while, pending the nature of further developments.

**THE TWO DOCTRINES OF GEORGIAN FOREIGN POLICY**

Currently, the political context in Georgia is defined by the strong confrontation of the Georgian Dream against the United National Movement. Public demand for establishing normal relations with Russia was one of the key reasons why most of the Georgian voters preferred the change of power. However, even now there is lively debate among the population over whether diplomatic relations should prioritise Russia or the West. These contradictory stances are the two doctrines of Georgian policy, which serve as the basis for the continuous fight between the opposition and the majority in the Georgian government. These two incompatible doctrines in turn impact the Georgian-Russian dialogue.

The new Georgian government not only states that a strategic partnership with the West is and will be Georgia's foreign policy priority, but also makes consistent steps to achieve such a partnership. At the same time, the dialogue with Russia is an important new dimension of the Georgian foreign policy. Yet the opposition argues that Ivanishvili's government swerved from the Euro-integration path and seeks to return Georgia into the Russian sphere of influence. The argument advanced by the United National Movement is that any attempt to establish normal relations with Russia automatically means Georgia's waiver of pro-Western orientation. The doctrine of the United National Movement is based upon the precondition that Russia, due to its imperialist nature, cannot accept the existence of independent states near its borders and uses the conflicts inherited from the Soviet period to delegitimise the sovereignty of those independent states. Thus, the dialogue with Russia is concluded to be impossible on principle and the new policy of Ivanishvili's government to have no chance of success. According to the Nationals' doctrine, after August 2008, Georgia has no conflicts with the Abkhaz and Ossetians and the only reasonable condition for commencement of the dialogue would be Russia's readiness to make steps towards denouncing the decisions of 26 August 2008. It would, however, be naive to expect such steps from Russia. Following this approach, it is evident that the situation is destined to a deadlock for an indefinite time, which will in its turn negatively affect the prospects for overcoming the critical shortage of communication and trust between the parties.

The Istanbul Process, coupled with other civil initiatives aimed at developing the Georgian-Russian dialogue, serves as a confirmation that the confrontation policy has a realistic alternative that requires support from the international community<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> George Khutsishvili, "Intellectual Dilemma or Political Hoax?", Democracy & Freedom Watch. 2013 <<http://dfwatch.net/intellectual-dilemma-or-political-hoax-94405>> accessed 18 August, 2014.

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**Post scriptum: Recent developments<sup>1</sup>**

*Since mid 2013 the Georgian-Russian dialogue of political experts is continuing within the framework of the project 'Fostering Russia-Georgia Neighbourly Relations through Multistakeholder Networking and Expert Dialogue', supported by the Government of Switzerland. A number of meetings were organised by ICCN, in partnership with one of the leading Russian think tanks, the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC).*

*Cooperation between stakeholders progressed, with a number of meetings taking place both in Tbilisi and in Moscow, addressing a wider scope of areas reviewed by the sides. The overall process is currently developing from Track 2 dialogue to Track 1.5 diplomacy to support the official Abashidze-Karasin bilateral dialogue format. Along with political expert communities and civil society representatives from both sides, attendees now include the scientific and business communities, as well as the representatives of government bodies.*

*The presentation of a working paper, in the spring of 2014, was widely considered a remarkable achievement; authored by both Georgian and Russian experts, it was presented in Moscow.*

*The most recent meeting of the Georgia-Russia dialogue took place in Moscow and was devoted to the issues of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement signed by Georgia. Following the recent meetings, the participating experts authored a collection of articles on issues including security and terrorism, migration, economic relations and historical relations, among many others. Additional papers covering the possibilities of economic interaction following the signing of the European Union Association Agreement by Georgia, as well as the economic and political analysis of the restoration of the railway connection through Abkhazia, were issued at the end of 2014.*

*An overall consensus from the meetings was that the development of security, humanitarian and economic cooperation is crucial, despite the existing political context. Considering the positive reception and the progress made so far, the dialogue is expected to continue.*

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<sup>1</sup> Post scriptum made by Zahid Movlazedeh, Member of the Editorial Team, Creating Spaces for Dialogue, GPPAC Dialogue and Mediation Series, Issue #1, GPPAC, 2015.

By George Khutsishvili, Ph.D., Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Tbilisi, October 3, 2013.

Published in "Pulse of Georgia: From October to October 2012-2013", by Independent Experts' Club, 2013.

## ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH-OSSETIA DIVIDES IN THE LIGHT OF GEORGIA-RUSSIA DIALOGUE: TRIANGULATION INSTEAD OF A FAILED TETRAGON?

*"The Common point in all major crises is that you cannot overcome them without transforming your mind".*

*George Khutsishvili*

Unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus have been studied in numerous works. However, interrelation of these two topics and especially the impact of the former on the latter have been understudied. The paper aims to fill this gap by undertaking a study of the versatile impact of unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus (mostly focusing on Abkhazia and South Ossetia cases and on Georgia-Russia relations) on the process and the prospect of democracy-building both in the regional states and the unrecognized republics, and the region as a whole. The regional security issues, reasonable neighborhood policies and the prospect of Euro- and Euro-Atlantic integration of South-Caucasus states, as well as their sustainable development in



general largely depend on realistic assessment of interrelationship between and interdependence of democracy and conflict. Apart from commonly known patterns of mutual alienation, stereotypization of perceptions, enemy image-making etc., the case of the Caucasus reveals the patterns that repeat or resemble those of various other regions. However, the Caucasus also creates a pattern of its own. Unresolved conflicts prompt the regimes to grow authoritarian, they impose uncompromising stance on the governments toward the issues that cannot be resolved without a compromise.

Since the early 1990s, ethno-political conflicts have seriously affected the Caucasus region, leaving more than 30,000 people dead and at least a million displaced from their homes. The legacy of these violent conflicts has been economic turmoil, political instability, mass migration and widespread suffering. Fragile official ceasefires preserved some stability for over a decade, yet internationally mediated peace talks failed to bring lasting solutions. In Georgia, two unresolved conflicts had been frozen along cease-fire lines – those between the central government, on the one hand, and the secessionist entities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, on the other – until a brief 2008 crisis that “de-froze” the conflict only to lock it in a new status quo.

After the conflicts had long remained in a protracted stage, never far from new eruptions of hostilities, the August 2008 Georgian-Russian five-day war over South Ossetia brought relations between the two countries to their lowest point since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Even prior to the renewed outbreak of hostilities, conflict resolution efforts with regard to Abkhazia and South Ossetia had been largely stalemated, with no tangible progress in negotiations and a lack of willingness on all sides to conduct an open dialogue and contemplate serious compromises. According to the Report of the EU-sponsored Independent International Fact-finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (so-called Tagliavini Report), a surprise missile attack of the Georgian military on the South-Ossetian capital Tskhinvali has triggered the crisis. The immediate Russian military intervention and subsequent political recognition of Abkhazia and

South Ossetia further compounded the difficulties of identifying viable solutions for a peaceful conflict settlement and all but eliminated possibilities for political dialogue. The subsequent political inertia and the antagonistic rhetoric on both sides was contributing to further deterioration in Russian-Georgian relations, maintaining overall tensions between the two sides, and blocking any chance for renewed negotiations. Given this stalemate, international efforts for reconciliation were in dire need to be supported and complemented by local actors, but politics were not supportive of this. The EU elaborated approach of “non-recognition with engagement” officially shared in Tbilisi also stumbled. The official Georgian position disregarding civil society’s appeals to start dialogue with Moscow was contributing to maintaining and freezing the post-war status quo, while Georgia needed the opposite, and the international community was also unable to develop any supportive strategies while Saakashvili and his Government adhered to the counter-productive thesis “De-occupation first, then the dialogue”. Considering the entire territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as “occupied territories”, the official Tbilisi has disregarded those as parties to conflict, and declared that Georgia had a single interstate conflict with Russia, which had logically completed the stalemate.

What kind of effect does the prolonged status quo and absence of communication do to an unresolved issue? Will there more or less opportunities appear, as the time passes? On the one hand, there is an objective need for de-isolation of the secessionist regions, and the government at a declarative level adhered to approaches that substantiated this need. On the other, we have seen the actual policies that deepened isolation and increased security risks. Russia has achieved as a result of the August 2008 war its major geopolitical goals in the regions; its military presence has been reestablished after withdrawal of the bases according to the bilateral agreement signed in Moscow in May 2005. The longer the stalemate lasts, the more it means vanishing chances for Georgia to reverse the situation any time in future. Without sustaining the declared policy of non-recognition with engagement, Georgia is risking to encourage

and ensure the final recognition, at least, in case of Abkhazia. The only viable alternative would require abandoning of the antagonistic rhetoric towards Russia, followed by the start of Georgia-Russia dialogue on a wide spectrum of issues, followed by real engagement and de-isolation policies of the Georgian state towards the seceded regions, and the subsequent confidence atmosphere achieved between the sides. Such a vision of “engagement without recognition” is shared by practically all external stakeholders, but the problem is that they do not see a motivation for themselves to invest an increased effort towards its realization.

The lack of visible progress in Georgia-Russia relations has also resulted in further polarisation of public perceptions between all sides involved in the conflict. As part of this, civil society dialogue between the conflicting communities has decreased substantially, giving way to apprehension and mistrust. At the same time, Georgia has seen a growing potential amongst a core of intellectuals and professionals over the past 15 years within the conflict resolution sector. These individuals are an important resource for the establishment of early warning and crisis management structures capable of cooperating with international institutions. The potential role of intellectuals and specialised think tanks in influencing their respective societies as opinion leaders, as well as political decision-makers, apparently needed to be harnessed.

### **THE RUSSIAN POSITION(S)**

There are actually two positions manifested so far on the Russian side. One is strict enough and demands that Georgia recognizes Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, officially complies with the existence of interstate borders with those two entities, changes its foreign-political orientation and curbs its Euro-Atlantic integration programs, and also joins the Russian-controlled alliances, such as CIS, the Customs Union and, in a longer prospect, the Eurasian Union. No question is even discussed about what Georgia gains in return if she does all that. Bearers of that mindset insist

on seeing Georgia not only as a small, weak, poor and vulnerable state, but a state that can only survive under Russia's protectorate and with Russia's benevolence, albeit with a reduced territory. Georgia is not really part of the equation at all, and is considered as America's and NATO's geopolitical instrument threatening the security of Russia's southern borders. Who can be identified with this position? Mostly, these are representatives of power structures and like-minded segments of society, people obsessed with the imperial grandeur syndrome, and people who are profited from the post-conflict status quo.

More objectively minded and moderate people realize Russia and Georgia need to build neighbourly relations, develop cooperation and, despite the obvious disproportion in size and power, achieve compromises in difficult issues to mitigate the outcomes of the long-lasting distrust and a recent armed confrontation. They are aware of the so-called "red lines", meaning that Georgia cannot afford changing partners, especially, overnight and for nothing, and that Georgia cannot recognize and legitimize breakaway regions to appease Russia, as well as Russia cannot revoke its decisions of August 2008 just to appease Georgia. But starting rapprochement has no alternative, and it should start from doable things first. Nostalgia among Russians for Georgian wine, mineral water and agricultural produce that were banned since 2006 on the Russian market, facilitated the efforts of the new Georgian government to start negotiations and achieve progress in returning those goods to where they once had been so popular.

### **THE GEORGIAN POSITION(S)**

Saakashvili's Government created the much disputed conception of non-transformability of Georgia-Russia relations. Saakashvili and his team were trying to persuade everyone that Russia is not swallowing Georgia only because they have created a defense wall against it. They had been positioning themselves as the only and uniquely bright, far-sighted and patriotic team who constantly

had to fight not only against external threats and challenges, but also against internal agents of influence and fifth columns operating under the disguise of political opposition and their supporters. Therefore one-party rule and marginalization of the opponents should have found legitimization. It is amazing how the external world would buy this story without raising serious questions, yet it is a fact that it did.

### **THE ISTANBUL PROCESS**

Shortly after the August 2008 crisis, ICCN initiated a dialogue process between this group and Russian counterparts, with the long-term aim to catalyse a broader political dialogue and reconciliation process. The first meeting under the title “Georgian-Russian Relations: Ways out of Crisis” was held in Istanbul, Turkey, in early November 2008 and included prominent Georgian and Russian political experts, such as Zurab Abashidze, former Ambassador of Georgia to the Russian Federation; Vladimer Papava, former Minister of Economic Development of Georgia; Archil Gegeshidze, Senior Fellow at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies; Paata Zakareishvili, Head of the Institute of Nationalism and Conflicts; Andrey Ryabov, Editor-in-chief of Russian monthly “Mirovaya Ekonomika I Mezhdunarodniye Otnosheniya” (World Economy and International Relations), as well as Emil Pain, Director of the Centre for Ethnopolitical and Regional Studies in Russia and others. This was the first direct cross-border exchange of positions and expert opinions regarding the August 2008 crisis, which marked the beginning of a wide-ranging exchange and analysis concerning the fundamental causes of the conflict, key trigger factors, and potential mechanisms for stabilising relations. Main directions of further work were agreed in a Memorandum titled The Istanbul Process. After ongoing communication amongst the group, facilitated by ICCN, a second round of dialogue was organised in November 2009 with a larger participation on both sides.

Despite differences in positions and perceptions, the participants have identified and agreed on a basic set of common goals, including the full support for the implementation of the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan of 12 August 2008, and the need for mechanisms for ongoing dialogue between the civil societies of Russia and Georgia. Preliminary agreement reached within the group includes several points.

The third round of the Istanbul Process took place on 14-15 November 2010 and marked a significant positive shift in the process (since than meetings in Istanbul were held on a frequenter basis). The members of the dialogue were able to share and analyse developments of the last year in a more open, direct yet sincere manner, and resulted in an agreement to identify joint policy recommendations for key international stakeholders. Furthermore, media representatives and media experts from Georgia and Russia were included for the first time. The Editor in Chief of Novaya Gazeta, Russia; Lasha Tugushi, Editor in Chef of Rezonansi Daily and Chairman of the Georgian Media Association, and other media representatives contributed to the discussions and committed to participate in developing a further strategy for engaging the Media to publicise the outcomes and key trends as discussed by the participants of the Istanbul Process.

The group further identified the need for scientific research to back up and inform the debate. Consequently, George Khutsishvili with a group of colleagues at ICCN had been conducting a qualitative research on Georgian public perceptions of Russia and Russians. The ambition was to conduct a similar study on the Russian side, to enable a comparison and analysis of the Georgia-Russia expert group. Hence Andrey Ryabov led the group of researchers at the Carnegie Moscow Center engaged in a parallel study in Russia. The entire research (material collecting/processing/analysing/structuring/editing) is already completed, and the results have been presented at the meeting in Istanbul in November 2012. The resulting book is due to be published in Russian, Georgian and English in spring 2013.

The Istanbul Process in 2010 has also led to the first publication of analytical articles jointly written by a group of Russian and Geor-

gian experts, on the subject of Georgian-Russian relationships and dynamics in the current context. Publication of the book “Russia and Georgia, The ways out of the crisis”<sup>1</sup> and its subsequent public presentation in February 2011 became an important public opinion factor and was highly assessed in expert circles of both countries. Since then the book is one of the key advocacy tools for the group to elaborate and disseminate joint policy recommendations.

So-called advocacy visits are important part of the dialogue process. It is necessary to verify and check the assumptions, intermediate results and conclusions, as well as possible venues and prospects for developments not only in domestic and regional expert communities, civil society forums and policy institutions, but also to do this directly at the international centres. In that respect the Istanbul Process group visit to the United States in late September 2012 proved a great success. Georgian and Russian scholars were able to deliver their findings and recommendations to a broad spectrum of state and academic institutions, such as US Department of State, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, American University (Washington), the Harriman Institute of Columbia University, Institute of Global Policy and World Federalist Movement (New York). The group members met with and cooperated with Georgian scholars in residence in the United States. The US representatives acknowledged that the visit has bridged the gap in information and understanding of the processes in Georgia and the Caucasus region (as confirmed by the surprise the October election results produced).

This project seeks to build on the Istanbul Process, which is the longest ongoing dialogue venue in the region, given the already changed political climate and the grown interest to the Georgia-Russia relations issues. Notably, the dialogue concerns a broader view, which includes, but doesn't solely focus on the tensions surrounding South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The project therefore aims to consolidate the relations and knowledge built up so far towards a more

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<sup>1</sup> George Khutsishvili and Tina Gogueliani, eds., Tbilisi: GPPAC & ICCN, 2010.

systematic interaction between Georgian and Russian civic actors with the extension to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia issues. This, in the long term, has the potential to build a legitimate platform for engaging both international actors with considerable influence in the region, as well as policy and decision makers in the local and regional contexts.

### **THE SITUATION IN GEORGIA SINCE THE OCTOBER 2012 ELECTIONS**

The situation in Georgia has dramatically changed after the opposition “Georgian Dream” (GD) Coalition defeated the ruling “United National Movement” (UNM) in October 2012 parliamentary elections. One of the definite public demands during the election campaign was building the dialogue towards normalisation of the relations with Russia. The new government and parliamentary majority declared a new course for rapprochement with Russia. Special Representative of the Prime Minister of Georgia to Georgia-Russia Relations has been appointed – Ambassador Zurab Abashidze who has been an active participant of the Istanbul Process. However, the initial attempts to create a basis for a sustainable Georgia-Russia dialogue have been developing in a difficult surrounding where there are advocates as well as sceptics for the process on both Georgian and Russian sides. There is also an open criticism and discrediting campaign from the representatives of the United National Movement, now in opposition, who are trying to prove that it is impossible to build relations with Russia while pursuing Euro-integration, and thus to substantiate that their policies of alienation from Russia were justified.

Georgia has been engaged in political debates since the Parliamentary elections of October 1, 2012 over a number of issues where positions of the ruling Georgian Dream Coalition and its constituency in Georgian society, on the one hand, and the oppositionary United National Movement and its supporters, on the other, have been fundamentally or moderately different. Yet, there is one issue



that stands alone in its significance and crucial character for the country's further development, and this is the question if European and Euro-Atlantic integration – and generally, Western orientation – and stable and predictable relations with Russia are mutually exclusive or compatible. Opposition's most severe criticism and categorical non-acceptance of the new majority's policies focus exactly in the answer to this question. Moreover, some opinions expressed in international press and by some foreign politicians confirm that there is a predicament around this question that cannot be resolved through a political debate but needs clarification through a substantial analysis and discussion together with professional scholars.

It is clear that international support for the historic process of building dialogue between Georgia and Russia should go via both political and non-governmental channels. Even in current circumstances when Georgia is interested in changing the post-August status quo while Russia is inclined to maintain it, and yet both sides realise that no progress can be achieved on the dispute over the Abkhazia and South Ossetia status, there are indications that economic, humanitarian, cultural and security aspects of the relations can be successfully explored. This would in its turn influence the current stalemate in Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Osset relations, opening new windows of opportunities. At the moment the idea of restoring the railway connection of Russia to Georgia via Abkhazia and cooperation of the sides for joint exploitation of Enguri Power Station occupy people's minds as possible venues.

### **THE INTELLECTUAL DILEMMA OR A POLITICAL MANIPULATION?**

Co-habitation between the post-election majority and minority was envisaged as a tool to stabilise the country and ensure its peaceful and democratic development. Instead, Georgia represents an arena of a severe political battle. The new parliamentary majority and government of Georgia are making first difficult steps towards normalisation of Georgia-Russia relations while stating that a

long-chosen strategic course for Euro- and Euro-Atlantic integration is not going to change. At the same time, the opposition National Movement and its leader Mikheil Saakashvili are declaring that it is impossible to normalise relations with Russia while maintaining strategic partnership with the West. Remarkably, there appear some Western journalists and politicians who support this politically motivated thesis, although the whole Western academic thought has substantiated the opposite. The project aims at broadening the area of discourse to involve leading world institutions and think-tanks to validate the possibility and necessity for Georgia to build economically advantageous and culturally mutually enriching relations with Russia, on the one hand, and ensure security of Russia's southern borders and stabilise tumultuous areas of Russian North Caucasus, on the other.

In the current political climate, the activation of a dialogue between the Russian and Georgian sides is attainable through civic agents and track-two diplomacy, together with a renewed meaningful dialogue between the political elites. In the long-term, provided such a process attains sufficient levels of trust and credibility amongst the parties involved, it has the potential of connecting with decision and policy makers to make a lasting difference. Civil society can play the bridging and monitoring role that has strengthened security sector governance in most Western countries. From the side of the government, this will require acknowledgement that CSO participation in peace-building and security matters ultimately strengthens the security of the state, and a commitment to continue this co-operation. In practice, however, much of the responsibility for supporting and developing civil society in Georgia will continue to fall on external actors such as international institutions, INGOs and policy bodies.

### **THE PROSPECT OF TRACK-ONE-AND-A-HALF**

So far the Istanbul Process (IP) developed as a track-two process. The intension was to activate high-profile non-governmental

experts and civil society leaders for exchange of independent positions and creating a scholarly discourse. Gradually IP turned into an influential source of expertise for the assessment of political developments and media analysis. Some of the IP participants got high positions in the government and parliament of Georgia after the October 2012 parliamentary elections (e.g. Messrs. Paata Zakareishvili, Zurab Abashidze, Giorgi Volski, Archil Gegeshidze et al.). They continue to actively cooperate with IP. Russian participants of the Istanbul Process confirm that representatives of Russian official circles would be interested to engage in dialogue whenever the format allows. The process therefore has all the preconditions to rise from track-two to track-one-and-a-half, i.e. from the format of non-governmental expert dialogue to a mixed format of governmental and non-governmental dialogue. A good example of such a transition of a dialogue process is so-called “Point of View” process started in the fall of 2008 by George Mason University’s School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (former ICAR) in partnership with ICCN and focused on Georgian-Osset dialogue. A series of meetings and roundtables initially comprising non-governmental leaders and experts from Tbilisi and Tskhinvali gradually turned into a powerful and sustainable process involving both governmental and non-governmental representatives, which has allowed to professionally and efficiently deal with the issues that require presence and involvement of decision-making persons and bodies.

### **INFRASTRUCTURES FOR PEACE**

Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) are an internationally proven tool for managing peaceful transformation of post-war and conflict situations. The impact of I4P on the peace and reconciliation process was made most salient through Peace Commissions created by governmental decisions in Kenya, Ghana, Uganda and Costa Rica which invited on different structural levels governmental and civil society representatives who worked together on elaboration and implementation of viable decisions. The GPPAC Honorary Chair Dr. Paul van Tongeren has initiated in 2012 creation of the Internation-

al Civil Society Network for Infrastructures for Peace. ICCN Director George Khutsishvili was offered to participate in the Network. Application of I4P to the processes related to Georgia-Russia and Caucasus unresolved conflicts will further support the achievement of the project goal. For information about the I4P Network and related publications.<sup>1</sup>

### **SUCCESS AND RISK FACTORS**

Despite the positive signs of the starting dialogue, the current state of relations between Georgia and Russia as well as approaches that the actors have towards the conflict solution pose barriers to continued dialogue between the sides. Therefore, it is important that through the careful selection process and ICCN's reputation, the expert group has credibility amongst relevant stakeholders. This credibility can be maintained and built on provided that the group can demonstrate clarity of purpose of its advocacy actions and recommendations, and that these build on empirical and analytical quality. The assumption is that the group will be able to progress from its current level of engagement – consisting of an overall exchange and debate – to a degree of common identity, purpose and, eventually, joint action. This would entail the ability of the group to reach consensus on certain key issues and recommendations; or alternatively, the ability to agree on the validity of differing perspectives to be presented in joint recommendations.

#### **Key risks include:**

- The process could have a negative impact on the situation and deepen the existing controversy if the dialogue is not conducted correctly and is driven by some hidden interests. The role of GPPAC as independent facilitator and its close collaboration with ICCN with its local knowledge is important in this aspect. Relevant lessons learned and additional indicators pertaining to the facilitation role will be identified as part of the action

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<sup>1</sup> please see [www.infrastructuresforpeaceinternational.org](http://www.infrastructuresforpeaceinternational.org).

learning process, to allow for a constant fine-tuning and adjustment of methodologies;

- The lack of political space and polarised public opinion could restrict the dynamics and level of engagement of the participants in the Istanbul Process. Providing at an earlier stage a safe space for dialogue outside this immediate context – both physically (e.g. Istanbul, Turkey; Chatham House Rule where appropriate) and virtually (anonymity and closed communities on the Peace Portal) was vital. In addition, the group was encouraged to openly voice concerns and have ownership of external communications, reports and position papers. Now there is a clear opportunity to conduct some meetings and other activities in Tbilisi or other cities in Georgia, and also in Russia provided we can count on benevolence of local authorities, which gives rise both to optimism and caution;
- More proactive cooperation with Media and publicising the key outcomes and messages coming of the Istanbul Process discussion can hamper the dialogue process if conveyed incorrectly and against the principles of conflict sensitive journalism. This is valid particularly for the media identifying with the opposition part of the Georgian political spectrum, whereby the Georgian participants of the Istanbul Process can be accused of compromising the Georgian State position. However, this risk factor can be avoided by engaging and including the key media representatives as participants of the Istanbul process.

**Output level:**

To achieve the planned outputs, the main assumption is that the current level of engagement and interest of the Istanbul Process participants is, at least, maintained. A key preoccupation will therefore be to keep up the momentum between physical meetings and to ensure the participants have ownership of the content. There is also an assumption that the partners, participants and stakeholders involved have sufficient research and analytical skills to produce

quality findings. Risks associated with the implementation of the activities include:

- If there is a breach in the levels of trust and intra-group dynamic there is a risk of fall-out over controversial issues;
- Gaps in research and analysis, such as omission of a gender perspective or of the recommendations of the region's gender consultants;
- Physical restrictions to meet (both Istanbul and Tbilisi/Moscow meetings) due to visa restrictions, conflicting agendas, or physical conditions in the host country. The Peace Portal provides a virtual meeting alternative in these cases;
- The possibility of tools and resources produced not meeting the needs of relevant stakeholders or not being sufficiently accessible (technologically; content-wise); the production of these must therefore be seen as an ongoing process rather than an "end of project" product, being evaluated and updated on an ongoing basis to ensure they meet real needs;
- Risks and measures related to increased media engagement, as outlined above, also apply to outputs.

2013

## **TWO DOCTRINES AND TWO ALTERNATIVE VISIONS IN GEORGIA**

Since being in opposition, UNM has managed to activate the discourse – internationally even more than domestically – over an alleged controversy in post-October Georgian policies of pursuing the goal of normalizing relations with Russia while maintaining the strategic pro-Western course and Euro-Atlantic integration.

His probable judgment was like this. It was highly unlikely that the geopolitical circumstances and disposition of powers changed favorably towards solution of the Georgian territorial issues within the term of his stay in power. Therefore there could be two alternatives in view: one was to prepare the ground – by difficult step-by-step movement – for future generations of politicians to

resolve the issue, with most probably no hail finally credited to him, keeping in mind the undeveloped political culture and post-totalitarian mass mentality in the country. The other alternative was to lock the geopolitical situation within the limits that guaranteed an impasse but gave legal grounds to place the whole responsibility for it on the Russian side. The August war provided an almost perfect opportunity for this kind of development.

From a number of eyewitness evidence reflected in publications and interviews, it can be considered as a proven fact that President Saakashvili has crossed out from the shaping ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008 a point according to which the future status of disputed territories should have been stated in the course of internationally facilitated negotiations, for which purpose a special commission was to be established. Reportedly, his action caused surprise of Presidents Sarkozy and Medvedev, but the final text of the famous six-point agreement was finally adopted without that point. Observers tended to explain Saakashvili's action as a whim or confusion, but it was in fact a purposeful step that fitted into his personal long-term strategy towards unresolved conflicts and Georgia-Russia relations. Soon after subsequent recognition by Russia of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states (August 26, 2008) signed by President Medvedev, the status of occupation has finally shaped in the Georgian government and the Law on Occupied Territories was unanimously adopted by the Georgian Parliament in October 2008. Immediately the UNM doctrine has become clear in all its features. Georgia no more had conflicts or "ethno-territorial disputes" with Abkhaz and South-Ossets – these issues have always been compromised by the Russian factor and now simply ceased to exist due to new realities – and only the conflict with Russia had finally taken a long-expected final shape. Developing a "creeping annexation" into an open one, Russia has according to the UNM doctrine managed by means of the August war to establish full control over the seceded territories and restore its strategically important military presence in Georgia. It does not make sense to develop relations with Abkhaz and Ossets ruled by

marionette regimes until de-occupation of Georgian lands is done. Thus the formula: “De-occupation first, then the dialogue”.

Russia’s rationale according to the UNM doctrine:

- Russia has never reconciled with independent and sovereign Georgian statehood, and since the fall of the Soviet Union used ethno-territorial disputes and her role of a broker for manipulation and pressuring aimed at keeping the former Union republics within Russia’s sphere of influence;
- ABL with South Ossetia has been moved to as close as 45 km from the capital Tbilisi, thus creating an intermittent threat syndrome and leverage for pressure.

Saakashvili’s rationale in shaping the UNM doctrine according to independent analysis:

Saakashvili’s doctrine imposed on Georgian society the extreme position in confronting the problem that excluded any progress in case of an extreme position. For the external consumption he needed to portray himself as smarter than the society, the latter being retrograde, backward, and retarded.

### **Conclusion**

There was a widely quoted – and largely ridiculed – sociological poll conducted in the fall of 2008 in Georgia that showed 22% respondents believed Georgia has won the August war with Russia (!). Analysts explained that as an effect of skillful propaganda of UNM. Strange as this may sound, there was accuracy in that poll result, only it was not Georgia, but Saakashvili who won his personal war with Russian leaders, and through that, with his own nation.

### **DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE TWO DOCTRINES. EXPRESSED OPINIONS**

Experiencing a serious lack of arguments to support their flagship thesis of new government’s betrayal of the declared pro-Western course, UNM would fervently look for any hint to build on towards a severer criticism of GD’s foreign policies.



Not always very shrewd in choosing persons for high places, Ivanishvili has made a flawless choice when he decided to appoint Zurab Abashidze to the newly established post of PM's Special Representative for Russia Affairs. Former Georgian Ambassador to Benelux and later Russia is not only a connoisseur in his sphere, but also a very skillful and cautious diplomat who would never award PM's opponents with any compromisable or even ambiguously interpretable data. Unlike the State Minister on Reintegration (in charge of conflicts) Paata Zakareishvili who could bluntly voice in earlier period of his appointment disputable ideas able to create a negative discourse, UNM has to build their criticism of the Georgia-Russia negotiations vis-à-vis EU integration policies almost solely on pure allegations, yet somehow taken seriously by The European People's Party (EPP) and others in the world.

Can a small country be independent? Or is it only about which dependence we would prefer or accept? Is it possible to serve two patrons?

Post-modernist thesis that interdependence is better than independence sounds a blasphemy here, but it really means that you get leverages in the former case, otherwise independence detaches, isolates and finally harms. Lack of communication enforces the enemy image, creates phobias and increases a risk of confrontation. Alternately, communication and interdependence increase predictability in bilateral relations and promote trust.

The developments since the October 2012 elections<sup>1</sup> ...

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: this article was not finalized by the author. This is the last work of Professor George Khutsishvili. On 4<sup>th</sup> of October, 2013 he unexpectedly passed away during his work at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.



## GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI

15.XI.1948 – 4.X.2013

*Birth date: 15 November, 1948.*

*Death date: 4 October, 2013.*

*Place of birth: Tbilisi, Georgia.*

*Place of death: Tbilisi, Georgia; buried at St. Nino Pantheon, Saburtalo, Tbilisi.*

George Khutsishvili, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor, was prominent Georgian conflictologist, one of the founders of conflictology in Georgia and the Caucasian region, scientist in the field of peace and conflict studies and public figure. In 1994 he founded independent non-for-profit and non-partisan organization “International Center on Conflict and Negotiation” (ICCN), 1995-2013 was publisher of “Peace Times”, “Conflicts and Negotiations”, “Alternative to Conflict”, etc. During years he was invited and worked as a professor at different leading universities in Georgia and abroad. George Khutsishvili made significant input in studying of the essence of theoretical thinking and the problem of the infinite in the light of philosophy and mathematics (1970-80s). From 1990s to the

end of his days George Khutsishvili dedicated his life to establishing and developing peace and conflict studies in Georgia.

### **CHILDHOOD**

George Khutsishvili was born on 15<sup>th</sup> of November, 1948 in Tbilisi to the family of Shota and Sophio (Samiko) Khutsishvili. George was keen on drawing and learning foreign languages from his early childhood. Due to his great interest in foreign languages, he quickly developed a professional knowledge of Russian and English. Apart from that, he had a basic knowledge of German, Polish and the Italian languages. Having a perfect command of the English and Russian languages, he considered himself trilingual. His passion for fine arts in his childhood was so great that at the age of 9 (1957) his parents introduced him to the greatest Georgian artist of his time, Lado Gudiashvili, who was said to have been quite delighted with George's talent and hard work. Gudiashvili gave George a sketchbook with his signature in it, wishing him a great success. In the following years, George Khutsishvili did not follow an artist's career, due to his parents' strong requests to the contrary; however, George cherished his love for art until the end of his days. There are hundreds of graphic and pictorial art works and sketches kept in the family archive that had been produced by the hands of George.

### **EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC DEGREES**

In 1966 George Khutsishvili graduated from Tbilisi I.N.Vekua phys-math secondary school N42 and in that same year was enrolled in Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, in the department of mechanics and mathematics, from which he successfully graduated in 1971. In 1976, he passed his PhD defense of his thesis on "Infinity and the Problem of its Abstraction in Science" and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University in 1977. The Supreme Attestation Commission (Moscow) awarded him the title of Professor of Philosophy in 1982. In 1987,

he successfully completed an intensive course in “English Language Simultaneous Translations” and was awarded a diploma.

In 1991 George was invited to Kiev due to his prominent work which he had published in Russian (“Genesis of the Structure of Theoretical Thinking”, Tbilisi; “Metsniereba”, Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy, 1989). At a “specialists only” Council Meeting of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukraine, he defended his thesis and was awarded a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (1991) by the Ukraine Academy of Sciences, endorsed by the supreme attestation commission (PhD, Diploma ДТ # 011423, issued by the Supreme Attestation Commission of Moscow, on 13 December, 1991, protocol 46д/8).

In 1995, he was awarded the Harvard Law School Certificate of Negotiation Training of the Program of Instruction for Lawyers.

### **PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

In 1971-1972, he worked as an applied mathematician at the Institute of Management Systems at the Academy of Sciences of Georgia. In 1972-1979 he worked as a researcher and then as a senior researcher at the Institute of Philosophy of the Georgian Academy of Sciences.

In 1979, George Khutsishvili was elected the deputy chair of the Methodological Council of the Academy of Sciences, and later he held the position of the co-chair until 1988. He was frequently invited to deliver public lectures on democratic reforms, which the Methodological Council was conducting regularly in the period of Gorbachev’s “Perestroika”. In October 1988, on behalf of the Eastern-German organization Kulturbund, Olaph Krebe invited him to several leading Universities in Germany to deliver a series of lectures (the Alexander Humboldt University, East Berlin; the Karl Marx University, and the Leipzig, Halle and Dresden Universities).

At the end of the 80s, George started researching various methodologies of finding water, biolocation, and bioenergy. His interest in this field was stirred after meeting with the representatives

of American dowzers at a Conference in 1989 in the USA. Later, from the beginning of the 1990s, he became a member of the American Society of Dowzers. In 1989, the Institute of Neotic Sciences invited George Khutsishvili to conduct research and awarded him a membership for one year (1990-1991).

In 1988-1990 he went on to work as the head of the Department of Social Sciences at the Ministry of Education of Georgia.

In 1992, the Tbilisi State Institute of Foreign languages and Pedagogical Sciences elected George Khutsishvili as a full professor. He had earlier since 1981 held the position of associate professor and chair of Philosophy.

The State Committee for Human Rights and Ethnic Relations, established in 1992, opened the Centre for Conflict Analysis, especially for Professor George Khutsishvili. The Centre was functioning during 1 year.

On 8 January 1993, George Khutsishvili won the competition of the US International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and was invited as a Research Fellow to the Centre for International Security and Arms Control, Stanford University. While working in the United States, he received funding from David Packard, a great philanthropist and benefactor, and a co-founder of Hewlett-Packard. The American press at that time spoke about George Khutsishvili as a "Fellowship Brings Unique Georgian Perspective to Stanford". Later, he was offered work as a consultant during the following year in the same Centre, in the field of ethnic conflicts in the post-Soviet space.

In the spring of 1993 George Khutsishvili was awarded a NATO Research Fellowship (Democratic Institutions Individual Fellowships Program) grant for carrying out study on "Caucasus Knot of Conflicts in Light of Growing Global Insecurity".

In 1994 George Khutsishvili became an Associate Professor of Conflict and Peace Studies at the Department of International Law and International Relations, at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, where he worked until 2006.

In 1995 -1997, he was appointed as a professor of Sociology at the American University of Hawaii, Tbilisi Campus. In 1995, Khutsishvili, one of the founders of the Academy of Georgian Philosophic Sciences, was elected as the Vice-President of the Academy. He held this position until 1997, inclusive.

In 1998, Khutsishvili was invited to take a position as a professor of Conflict Studies, at the Humanitarian-Technical Department of the Georgian Technical University, where he delivered lectures until 2001.

In 2001-2010, George Khutsishvili had been invited to be a member of several state commissions at different ministries to work on Caucasus oil/gas pipeline projects, public opinion and media, the development of a National Security Concept for Georgia, cooperation with civil society, conflict resolution, elections, and other issues.

In 2006-2011, he held the position of a full professor at the Georgian University.

For many years, George Khutsishvili had worked as a member of the commission for selecting academic positions, and on the scientific board for granting degrees in the social sciences at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.

In 2008-2009 Khutsishvili worked as the Chief Investigator of the Multi-track Dialogue for the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict, in an international programme supported by the European Commission. In 2001-2002, 2009, and 2011-2012, he had been invited by the USAID to become a member of conflict assessment mission groups in Georgia.

**PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES IN GEORGIA, FOUNDATION OF INTERNATIONAL CENTRE ON CONFLICT AND NEGOTIATION (ICCN)**

Professor Khutsishvili developed his interest in conflict resolution from the beginning of the 1990s. At that time, this field did not exist in Georgia, while in the west it was rather well developed. In that

period, George worked in the Tbilisi Business School where he first introduced his course of studies in conflictology.

In 1993-1994, while working in the United States, George applied for a grant to well-known The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, on the recommendation of his colleagues where he obtained his first grant to establish an independent Center for Conflict and Negotiation. According to the grant terms, his partner in this initiation was to be Stanford University.

Upon his return from the United States in 1994, George Khutsishvili established the first independent high profile organization in Georgia, which gave birth to the Georgian educational and scientific programs on conflict and peace studies. George Khutsishvili and 63 other founding members launched their organization at a meeting held on 8 August, 1994, where they established “The International Center on Conflict and Negotiation Strategy”. Through a general decision of the meeting members, George Khutsishvili was granted status as the founder. This non-profit organization with international status was registered by the Department of Registration of the Ministry of Justice of Republic of Georgia on 3 October, 1994, under the above title, pursuant to resolution #20/3.

Due to corresponding changes in the legislation of Georgia, the Center for Conflictology (as it is still publicly referred to), had to register a new several times. On 30 December 1998, the name of the Centre was changed and reregistered as the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN) ([www.ICCN.ge](http://www.ICCN.ge)). Professor George Khutsishvili headed the Center until the end of his life. The Centre continues its successful activities today and is a powerful, field-oriented NGO in Georgia, as well as in the Caucasian region.

### **PEACE ACTIVITIES**

Starting in 1995, he edited and issued trilingual magazines and bulletins which provided relevant expert and educational materials on conflict and peace issues for conflict affected populations. With this, Khutsishvili made a valuable contribution to strengthening civil

society (“Conflicts and Negotiations” (1995-2001); “Alternative” (1996-1998); “Monada” (1997-1998); “Alternative to Conflict” (1998-2003); “Peace Times” (2001-2013)).

Since 1995, the foundation has been laid for Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian dialogues, on the initiative of George Khutsishvili, in the format of public diplomacy. After the conflicts, some contacts existed between post-conflict divided societies, however, the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation headed by George Khutsishvili was a pioneer to start dialogue process. He addressed the Abkhaz people at the Conference (1995) in Moscow, proposing to start the first dialogue, where he met Manana Gurgulia and Roman Dbar. Kumar Rupesinkhe, who was then a representative of International Alert, (IA) London, took an interest in Khutsishvili’s idea, and later the first Georgian-Abkhazian dialogue project was implemented with Rupesinkhe’s support. This project lasted for many years. The first Georgian-Abkhazian dialogue took place in July 1996.

The process of a Georgian-Ossetian dialogue started in 1995. The famous scientist Roger Fisher contacted professor Khutsishvili and offered his cooperation in the Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian format (Conflict Management Group (CMG), USA). This is how the Georgian-Ossetian dialogue started with the support and financial aid of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). From the very start, this organization ensured their support to Khutsishvili’s Centre in educational programs for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The first Georgian-Ossetian meeting took place in January 1996, in Oslo, upon the request of the NRC.

In 1996, George Khutsishvili held a joint seminar on “Developing a Regional Security Concept for the Caucasus” with NATO. This seminar attracted the attention of the West with the following message of his organization: “We need to develop the concept of regional security first, rather than the concepts of national security”. The working topic of this seminar was based on George Khutsishvili’s idea, which he had proposed to NATO. In that period, NATO was developing the concept of national security in almost all post-Soviet countries, in



order to help the nations. Khutsishvili's idea, which insisted that national security concepts could not be developed without regional security concepts, was considered, discussed and summarized at the seminar. The results were published in the following book in the Georgian and English languages: "Developing a Regional Security Concept for the Caucasus", International Conference materials, 4-6 October, 1996, Tbilisi, Georgia. Editor, George Khutsishvili, 1997. Later, NATO introduced the above approach to many other countries.

In 2003, together with other prominent figures, he convened a special meeting and founded the "Public Movement against Religious Extremism" to counteract the violent actions of religious extremism that had been gaining momentum in that period. For years, he had been supporting the establishment of the rule of law, non-violence, and tolerance in society.

In 2003-2013, George Khutsishvili was a member of the International Steering Group of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). Within the format of this network, he participated in the work of groups studying different conflicts all over the world. As well as that, he was a member of special missions for international conflict studies, prevention and resolution. The organization founded by George Khutsishvili continues its membership in the GPPAC network, and is its representative in the Caucasus.

In 2006, civil society united against structural violence with Khutsishvili's active support and through the invitation of the regular congress of non-governmental organizations the development of a Unified NGO Platform has started. The first NGO Congress was held in 2006 in Georgia, followed by the Second and Third NGO Congresses, in 2007 and 2008 respectively, in which Georgian NGOs participated extensively.

After the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008, the post-war rounds of Georgian-Russian meetings and negotiations started on the initiative of professor George Khutsishvili, which later was called the Istanbul Process, being named so due to it being the first post-

war meeting ever, which was held in Istanbul in November 2008. This very first meeting laid the foundation for expert dialogue, which is still going on within the same format. By means of this dialogue, experts have studied the fundamental reasons of the conflict and the ways towards its resolution, jointly. The materials of this Georgian-Russian dialogue, and the ways discussed of overcoming the crises, have already been published in a book.

G. Khutsishvili was one of the initiators and a founder of the Public Constitutional Commission (PCC, [www.konstitucia.ge](http://www.konstitucia.ge)), which was created in response to the existing political crisis in the country. This PCC united well-known constitutionalists and public figures of the country in 2009-2011. The PCC developed a completely renewed, more acceptable edition of the Constitution for the country, which was free from political and party interests. This version of the new edition of the Constitution of Georgia, which was developed by the authorship of 17 Commission Members, was published on 9 April, 2010 in a book form (an Expanded Concept of the New Edition of the Constitution of Georgia, Tbilisi, 9 April, 2010).

## **FAMILY**

Father, Shota Khutsishvili (1924-2012) was a renowned engineer and inventor in the field of aviation. George's grandfather – Nikoloz Khutsishvili was an adept of the first Georgian aeronaut Besarion Keburia, serving first as his engine driver and engineer, and later already as an independent pilot. Shota Khutsishvili had about 200 patented inventions in the filed of aviation and energy resources. George's mother – Sophia Khutsishvili (nee Taralashvili) (1924-2012) sang (mezzo-soprano) in the Georgian State Choir (Capella). After George's birth, she left her job and devoted all her life to the upbringing of her only son.

George Khutsishvili married Nina Tsikhistavi on 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1995. On 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1996 their daughter – Victoria-Sophia Khutsishvili was born.

### **PASSING AWAY**

On 4 October 2013, at 10 o'clock in the morning, Professor George Khutsishvili arrived at the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (Building #4) to attend the session of the Commission for the selection of academic positions. A few minutes after the beginning of the meeting, he felt unwell and unexpectedly passed away at the age of 64. Information was immediately spread in the media. His family and organization received condolences during months from all the conflict zones of Georgia and Caucasus, as well as many countries of the World.

### **ABOUT GEORGE KHUTSISHVILI:**

1996-1997 – Who's Who in Georgia, first edition; publishing house Diogenes, 1997.

1996 – On 9<sup>th</sup> of November 1996, the President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze nominated Professor George Khutsishvili as his first candidate for the position of Public Defender in the newly established Institute of Public Defender, which was preceded by many years of lobbying and recommendations on the part of the diplomatic corps, to the President of Georgia, to support an eligible candidate. During a preliminary meeting of the candidate with a fraction of the then parliamentary majority – “Citizens' Union”, professor George Khutsishvili refused to fulfil the party tasks, in case he would be elected as the Public Defender, all the while maintaining that the Public Defender's Institute would be independent. This statement turned out to be decisive and George Khutsishvili did not receive enough votes in these elections.

1998-1999 – Who's Who in Georgia, the second edition, Georgian Biographical Dictionary; Georgian Biographical Centre, 1999;

2001-2002 – Who's Who in Georgia, the third edition, Georgian Biographical Dictionary; Bakur Sulakauri publishing house – Georgian Biographical Centre, 2002.

2007 – Civil Society of Georgia nominated George Khutsishvili as a candidate for the membership of the Steering Board of the Georgian Public Broadcasting. The Public Defender, Sozar Subari also recommended his candidature. The Parliament of Georgia elected him a member of the supervisory board.

2008 – Diaries of the “Radio Tavisupleba”, Radio “Liberty”, 2009.

**HONORARY TITLES, AWARDS, PRIZES, REWARDS:**

In 1990 he was awarded an Honorary Citizen of Atlanta (the State of Georgia, in the USA);

1993 – he won the competition in an IREX program;

1993 – he became the first scholarship holder of NATO in Georgia;

1994 – continues his activities in Stanford University (USA); an additional year for his tuition was funded by the great benefactor David Packard;

1995 – was awarded the Certificate of Appreciation for developing Georgian CultureGram by the D. Kennedy Centre for International Studies and the Centre for CultureGram (Iowa, USA);

2006 – was awarded the title of honorary citizen of Los Angeles (California, USA);

2008 – was awarded a certificate of appreciation for the aid he rendered to the families below the poverty line by “The Future Way”;

2008 – for his contributions to supporting interethnic tolerance in Georgia the organization “Multinational Georgia” presented him with a painting by a child winner of the competition;

2009 – Georgian Public Defender’s Office awarded George Khutsishvili and his organization – International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, the Tolerance Advocate Certificate;

2010 – was granted the title of a peace Envoy from the World Peace Federation;

15 November 2013, George Khutsishvili was posthumously granted the Public Defender's award along with the title of the Most Tolerant Person of the Year.

**ACADEMIC /EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES:**

1974-1986 – Classical philosophy, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU);

1983-1986 – Symbolic Logic, Tbilisi Institute of Foreign Languages (TIFL); 1980–1993 – classical philosophy in English and Russian languages, Tbilisi Institute of Foreign Languages (TIFL);

1987-1991 – Foundations of conflict resolution, Tbilisi Business School (currently called the Free University);

1988-1991 – Business English; Tbilisi Business School/ ESM (currently called the Free University);

1994-1996 – Foundations of Modern Sciences (in the English language); Courses of Simultaneous Translation, Tbilisi Institute of Foreign Languages (TIFL);

1996-1997 – Introduction to Sociology (in the English language) American University of Hawaii, Tbilisi Campus;

1999-2001 – Peacebuilding and Conflict Management – Georgian Technical University (GTU);

1994-2006 – Conflict Theories (for bachelor and masters students) at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU));

2007-2011 – International Conflict Analysis for the students of master's program, University of Georgia (UG).

**PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT, WORKING IN CONFLICT ZONES, MEDIATION:**

Abkhazia, Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia; Cyprus (Northern and Southern parts); Kosovo and Serbia; Mindanao (the Philippines); Basque province (Spain); Moldova and Pridnestrovie; Sri Lanka; Bosnia and Herzegovina; North Ireland; North Caucasian regions; Jerusalem, West Coast; Lebanon (Middle East) and others.

**PUBLICATIONS:**

The author of 20 monographs and co-author and/or compiling editor of many others; the author or co-author of more than 200 scientific articles published in Georgian, English and Russian languages, one fiction, and many social and political articles in newspapers.

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# INDEX

## A

- Abashidze Aslan 73, 303, 331, 366,  
420, 505, 507  
Abashidze Zurab 124, 594, 604, 607,  
610, 616  
Abraham Larry 95  
Ahtisaari Martii 449  
Akhalaia Bachana (Bacho) 561  
Akhmeteli Nina 438  
Alexander the Great 125  
Aliyev Heidar 14  
Allen Nan Susan 443  
Annan Kofi 430  
Archvadze-Gamsakhurdia Manana  
201  
Ardzinba Vladislav 49, 82, 404

## B

- Barlett Maria 124  
Bauwens Werner 121  
Beria Lavrentiy 32, 82, 102  
Berne Eric 2, 244  
Bismarck Otto Eduard Leopold,  
Prince of Bismarck, Duke of  
Lauenburg 480  
Blake William 234  
Boden Dieter iii, ix, xi, 336, 337, 408  
Bohr Niels 234  
Brezhnev Leonid 19, 66, 138, 140,  
141, 192, 481, 566  
Brzezinski Zbigniew 30, 632  
Bukharin Nikolai 135  
Burjanadze Nino 344, 438  
Bush George H.W. 97, 141

- Bush George W. 466, 475, 509, 522,  
539

## C

- Cantor Georg Ferdinand Ludwig  
Philipp 240  
Ceausescu Nicolae 152  
Chaban Sergey 515  
Chervonnaya Svetlana 49, 73, 74,  
75, 87  
Chibirov Ludwig 188, 422  
Chkhikvishvili Vladimir 506  
Clausewitz Carl von 480  
Clinton Bill 29, 122  
Colin Cherry 237, 238  
Constatinescu Emil 289  
Courtney William 122

## D

- David IV, the Rebuilder 58  
Dbar Roman 623  
Djukanovich Milo 283, 284  
Dorenko Sergey 267  
Dostoevsky Fyodor 29  
Drnovsek Janez 287  
Dudayev Dzhokhar 114, 153, 203  
Dzneladze Marlen 483

## E

- Einstein Albert 236, 425  
Elchibey Abulfaz 13, 14  
Eliava Akaki 70, 303  
Esebua Gocha 202  
Evans Gareth 460, 461, 471, 523,  
551, 634

## F

Felgenhauer Pavel 540  
Feyerabend Paul Karl 326  
Fisher Roger 623, 630, 632  
Frlec Boris 287

## G

Gakhokidze Jemal 206  
Galileo Galilei 249  
Galtung Johan iii, xiii, xiv, 167, 368,  
487, 511  
Gamkrelidze David 346  
Gamsakhurdia Zviad x, 10, 12, 13,  
23, 32, 35, 36, 37, 39, 46, 48,  
49, 51, 59, 62, 65, 66, 71, 78,  
79, 82, 93, 98, 99, 101, 102,  
142, 144, 175, 182, 198, 201,  
203, 204, 303, 305, 311, 357,  
375, 403, 404, 470, 504, 506,  
512  
Gandhi Mahatma 425, 426  
Gandhi Rahul 425  
Gandhi Rajiv 425  
Gandhi Sonia 425  
Gegeshidze Archil 604, 610  
Giorgadze Igor 90, 91, 198, 200, 505  
Giorgadze Panteleimon 200  
Godel Kurt Friedrich 234  
Gorbachev Mikhail 4, 11, 17, 31, 32,  
66, 67, 70, 71, 76, 78, 95, 96,  
97, 126, 127, 130, 137, 141,  
142, 143, 144, 160, 163, 212,  
213, 240, 308, 619  
Gretton Michael P. 122  
Gudiashvili Lado 618  
Gugushvili Besarion 40  
Gulosino Charisse 299  
Gurgulia Manana 623

## H

Hammarberg Thomas 527, 550, 633  
Havel Vaclav 142  
Hecataeus of Miletus 57  
Hegel Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 133

Heisenberg Werner Karl 235  
Hemingway Ernest 128  
Heraclitus of Ephesus 239  
Herodotus 57  
Hesse Hermann 247  
Hitler Adolf 25, 97, 98  
Hoover Edgar 266, 633  
Hopmann Terrence P. 124  
Humboldt Alexander 619  
Huntington Samuel P. 84, 93, 630,  
631, 632  
Husserl Edmund Gustav Albrecht  
326  
Huxley Aldous 98, 326, 631

## I

Ilia II Catholicos-Patriarch of All  
Georgia 309  
Imnadze Kakha 124  
Ioseliani Jaba 102, 175, 198, 203, 404  
Israelian Victor 97  
Ivanov Igor 366, 505, 507  
Ivan the Terrible 25, 85

## J

Javakhia Lilli 336  
Javakhishvili Ivane 616, 618, 620,  
621, 626, 628  
John Paul II Pope 311  
Jung Carl Gustav 329

## K

Kalandadze Giorgi 561  
Kant Immanuel 236, 325, 565, 583  
Karasin Grigoriy 594, 598  
Katcharava George 483, 487, 494  
Kavsadze Alexander 49  
Keburia Besarion 625  
Khasbulatov Ruslan 32, 144  
Khmaladze Vakhtang 483  
Khrushchev Nikita 19, 64, 136, 137,  
138  
Khutsishvili Nikoloz 625  
Khutsishvili Shota 625

Khutsishvili (Taralashvili) Sophia 625  
Khutsishvili Victoria-Sophia 625  
Kikachishvili Tengiz 201  
Kitovani Tengiz 49, 50, 51, 72, 102, 175, 198, 215  
Kokoity Eduard 422, 436, 437, 441, 508  
Kostakos Georgios 281  
Kostava Merab 65, 66, 506  
Kozava-Tskhovrebova Lira 443  
Kramer Stanley Earl 136  
Krebe Olaph 619  
Kucan Milan 287  
Kuhn Thomas 239  
Kukhianidze Alexandre 483, 493, 494, 497, 498  
Kviraia Shota 211  
Kvirashvili Khatuna 341

## L

Lantos Tom 125  
Leibnitz Gottfried Wilhelm 98, 236, 240  
Lenin Vladimir (Ulyanov) 16, 19, 25, 36, 37, 76, 83, 85, 97, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 137, 139, 195  
Libal Michael 177  
Lomaia Kakha 315, 345  
Lomashvili Zurab 124  
Lukashenko Alexander 214

## M

MacArthur John D. and Catherine T. 33, 124, 275, 622, 633  
MacFarlane Neil S. 9, 43, 52, 75, 93, 105, 106, 379, 550, 630, 631, 632, 633  
Mamardashvili Merab 136  
Manig Wolfgang 124  
Marx Karl 7, 16, 19, 31, 60, 94, 99, 128, 129, 130, 133, 134, 138, 139, 619  
McDonald John W. iii, xv, xvi

Medvedev Dmitry 454, 455, 486, 511, 524, 525, 531, 550, 551, 605, 614  
Menagarishvili Irakli 121, 206  
Merton Robert K. 192  
Milosevic Slobodan 284, 286, 287, 289, 290, 298, 343, 449  
Mkalavishvili Basil 310, 313, 379, 383  
Morozov Pavlik 130  
Muller Heinrich 140  
Murphy Edward A. 167  
Mzhavanadze Vasil 65

## N

Nadareishvili Tamaz 331, 404  
Nadibaidze Vardiko 218  
Napoleon Bonaparte 25  
Newton Isaac 240  
Nikolas II, Tzar 131  
Nitzsche Alexander 299  
Nudler Oscar 326, 327

## O

Obama Barack 480, 528, 566, 587  
O'Neal Molly 124  
Orvelashvili Nikoloz 487  
Orwell George 502

## P

Packard David 620, 627  
Pain Emil 604  
Papava Vladimer 604  
Patariaia Kristine 446  
Patarkatsishvili Badri 478  
Peter the Great 25, 85, 132  
Pichkhadze Shalva 483, 492, 493, 499  
Poplasen Nikola 285  
Primakov Yevgeni 201  
Protagoras 326  
Pushkin Alexander 29  
Putin Vladimir 361, 426, 464, 467, 506, 508, 509, 511, 525, 531, 543, 551, 575

## R

Raduyev Salman 200, 203  
Rice Condoleezza 455, 523  
Rodionov Igor 70, 71  
Roszak Theodore 230  
Rupesinkhe Kumar 623  
Rutskoi Alexander 32, 97, 125, 143  
Ryabov Andrey 590, 604, 605  
Rykov Alexei 135

## S

Saakashvili Mikheil x, 204, 212, 331,  
332, 333, 334, 341, 342, 343,  
344, 345, 346, 361, 367, 420,  
421, 433, 442, 455, 464, 465,  
466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 473,  
475, 476, 477, 480, 503, 508,  
510, 511, 512, 514, 522, 523,  
525, 530, 531, 533, 536, 537,  
538, 543, 551, 561, 562, 563,  
565, 566, 574, 575, 578, 584,  
585, 586, 601, 603, 609, 614,  
615  
Sakharov Andrei 142  
Salem Paul E. 243  
Sanakoev Dmitry 435, 436, 441  
Sarishvili Irina 211  
Sarkozy Nikola 454, 455, 486, 524,  
550, 605, 614  
Schnabel Albrecht 52, 280, 299, 355  
Sechehaye Marguerite A. 98  
Sharadze Guram 271, 313  
Sharp Gene 425  
Shevardnadze Eduard ix, x, 6, 7, 10,  
11, 13, 32, 37, 38, 40, 49, 51,  
65, 72, 78, 80, 81, 89, 90, 91,  
93, 95, 97, 100, 102, 114, 118,  
119, 144, 145, 152, 154, 163,  
164, 174, 175, 188, 193, 199,  
200, 201, 202, 204, 205, 206,  
214, 215, 216, 217, 240, 254,  
258, 267, 270, 332, 333, 343,  
345, 346, 357, 362, 366, 367,  
404, 405, 437, 468, 470, 475,

479, 505, 506, 507, 512, 531,  
535, 536, 537, 538, 626

Shoygu Sergey 12  
Singh Manmohan 425  
Solana de Madariaga Francisco Javier  
119, 169  
Songulashvili Malkhaz 311  
Soros George 267, 344, 345, 365  
Stalin Joseph (Jugashvili Ioseb) xiii,  
16, 19, 21, 25, 32, 63, 64, 66,  
69, 76, 82, 83, 85, 102, 127,  
135, 137, 138, 308

Starovoitova Galina 4  
Stedman Stephen John 347, 354, 407  
Steeves Kevin 299  
Stolypin Pyotr 128  
Strazisar Teran Nika 299  
Suny Ronald 59, 60, 64, 65, 371, 633  
Swami Vivekananda 235

## T

Tagliavini Heidi 336, 337, 464, 471,  
521, 522, 550, 600, 634  
Tamar the Great, Queen 58  
Tevdoradze Elene 317  
Tigranes II, the Great 58  
Tongeren Paul van 610  
Trotsky Leon 128, 132, 135  
Tsereteli Irakli 60  
Tsintsiskiladze Giorgi 349  
Tudjman Franjo 286  
Tughushi Lasha 483, 492, 498, 499,  
605  
Turner Victor 381  
Tutu Desmond 425  
Tymoshenko Yulia 564

## V

Villedenbrance John Vatican  
Cardinal 309  
Volski Giorgi 610

## W

Walesa Lech 425  
Waltz Kenneth Neal 156, 633

Webster Nesta Helen 94  
Wittgenstein Ludwig Josef Johann  
235, 326

## Y

Yakobashvili Temur 464, 498, 528  
Yalowitz Kenneth S. 557  
Yanayev Gennadi 143  
Yanukovych Viktor 510  
Yeltsin Boris 19, 23, 27, 29, 30, 31,  
32, 35, 51, 83, 86, 87, 96, 97,  
114, 126, 138, 143, 144, 153,  
160  
Yunus Muhammad 425  
Yushchenko Viktor 473  
Yusin Maxim 362

## Z

Zakareishvili Paata 604, 610, 616  
Zeeman Pieter 240  
Zeno of Elea 238, 239  
Zhirinovskiy Vladimir 7, 9, 23, 29,  
30, 31, 32, 35, 508, 558  
Zhordania Noe 60  
Zhvania Zurab 205, 216, 334, 344,  
346, 477, 536  
Zinoviev Grigory 135  
Zubitashvili Davit 204





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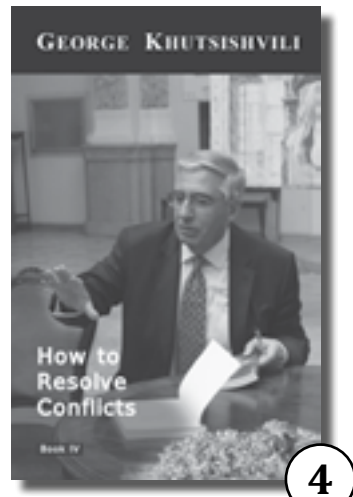
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(1948-2013)

As a Professor and prominent Georgian conflict researcher, George Khutsishvili (1948-2013) was one of the founders of the study of conflict in Georgia and the Caucasian region. Originally contributing significantly to the problem of infinity in the field of mathematics and philosophy, from the 1990s onwards he dedicated his life to establishing the academic field of peace and conflict studies in Georgia. He was Philosophy Doctor from Ukraine Academy of Sciences (1991) and from Tbilisi State University (1977), Founder and since 1994 Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Full Professor of University of Georgia (from 2006), Associate Professor of Tbilisi State University (1995-2006), Professor of Tbilisi Institute of Foreign Languages (1979-1993), Visiting Research Fellow and Consultant in Ethnic Conflicts at Stanford University (1993-1995). Initiated and organised the first track-two post-war dialogue processes with Abkhaz (1995), Ossets (1996) and Russians (2008); played a key role in mobilizing the civil society against the religious and ethnic intolerance in Georgia in 2002 onwards. Since 2003 was the Caucasus Regional Coordinator of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). Professor Khutsishvili was one of the initiators and a founder of the Public Constitutional Commission (PCC) (2009). Has visited and explored many conflict and tension zones of the world; author and co-author of numerous books and articles. He remained involved in mediation in many different conflict zones throughout the world. Was an acknowledged political analyst and conflict mediator. Combined the qualification and experience of both scholar and practitioner in the field.

