The Five-Day War:
Russian Interests in the War against Georgia

Master Thesis Eastern European Studies
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The relations between Russia and Georgia have been the most anxious of all the former Soviet republics. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus in general and Georgia in particular, is the region where Russia is most involved. Both the Baltics and Central Asia policies seem far more passive than its policy towards the Caucasus.¹ The Baltics are now members of the European Union (EU) and NATO, while Central Asia is creating ties with both China and the United States (US). However, Russia does not want any outside interference in the case of Georgia. Here, together with Ukraine, Russian diplomacy in no way is ready to make concessions.

1.1 Georgian statistics

The Republic of Georgia is one of the fifteen former Soviet Republics that have gained independence after the fall of the Soviet Union. It is situated in South-western Asia, between Turkey and Russia and lies at the Black Sea. It has a population of 4.6 million people and it is ethnically rather homogeneous with more then 83% being Georgian.² Other ethnic groups are Russians (1.5%), Armenians (5.7%), Azeri (6.5%), Abkhaz and Ossetians (less then 1%).³ Religiously it is divided between Orthodox Christians (83.9%), Muslims (9.9%), Armenian-Gregorian (3.9%), and a small amount of others among whom are Catholics (0.8%),

¹ Sergei Markedonov, ‘The Paradoxes of Russia’s Georgia Policy’ Russia in Global Affairs No.2 2007
² Ibid
³ Ibid
1.2 Georgian minority issues

Georgia has been divided into nine regions and two autonomous republics, Abkhazia and Adjara. This division into territorial units had been dominantly set up in the early days of the Soviet Union construction. Three of these territorial units were seeking more autonomy after Georgia became an independent state. The two autonomous republics, Abkhazia and Adjara together with another minority region, South Ossetia, felt specifically threatened by the nationalistic rhetoric that arose from the Georgian state building efforts in the late eighties, early nineties. However, it was Abkhazia and South Ossetia who went as far as seeking total independence. This resulted in a war in both regions in the beginning of Georgian independence. After these wars came to an end with the support of Russian ‘peacekeeping’ troops, the situation got to a stand still. The conflicts were not solved and the two regions, under Russian ‘peacekeeping’ presence, started to build alternative states. The conflicts were now referred to as ‘frozen conflicts’. The Russian interference with the Georgian minority conflicts has had vast influence on the relations between Russia and Georgia.

1.3 Russia and Georgia

The relations between Russia and Georgia have been quite paradoxical since the break-up of the Soviet Union. On the one hand there are traditional – primarily socio-cultural ties between Russia and Georgia, dating back to the 200 years inclusion in the Russian empire. This causes them to cooperate both bilaterally as well as multilaterally. On the other hand the relations since 1989 have also been marked by conflict.

The research on the relations between Russia and Georgia in this thesis will commence at the break-up of the Soviet Union, with Georgia as one of the catalysts states. The former Russian empire was now brought back to the size of the Russian Federation and thus lost, without much struggle, a vast amount of terrain. For years to come, it had made no real effort to regain tangible influence in the territory. The country’s domestic weakness and multiple political and economic crises throughout the 1990 have consequently made foreign affairs less dominant in comparison to the Soviet era. Although Yeltsin’s foreign policy during his second term was already more focused on the neighbouring countries, with the installation of Putin as president, foreign policy really began to shift to the regaining of lost influence in the region.

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Putin created a very distinct foreign policy, specifically towards the former republics of the SU (also referred to as the ‘near abroad’).

Another dominant shift in relations between Georgia and Russia occurred in 2004. At the end of 2003, Georgia experienced the so called ‘Rose Revolution’, where, against Russia’s interest and interference, the western oriented Mikheil Saakashvili was elected president. He was inaugurated on January 25, 2004. Next to the search for more western cooperation, including NATO membership, Saakashvili wanted to reunify Georgia by claiming back the de facto states.

So both the Russian shift in foreign policy under the presidency of Vladimir Putin, and the events within Georgia itself, have caused the relationship between Georgia and Russia to deteriorate severely, and in effect, have heightened Russian concentration on Georgia.

1.4 Research question

The five-day war and its aftermath, the Russian recognition of the two de facto states Abkhazia and South-Ossetia and the occupation of Georgian territory, are the absolute climax of both the relation between the two states in general, and the issue of the ‘frozen conflicts’ in specific. This altogether was the first war between Russia and a former union republic and therefore emphasized the extraordinary relationship between the two. Although the international community is slowly recognizing that Georgia started the conflict by attacking South Ossetia, Russia did choose to act in an extreme manner, starting a vast disproportional military operation Georgian territory. This, together with the official recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states, has created immense international opposition. The question that arises here is; what were the particular Russian interests in going to war with Georgia over South Ossetia? Furthermore, why was it willing to risk even more political and economic isolation with the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states?

In order to answer these questions, a number of elements within the Russian-Georgian relations will be researched. First of all the relations between the two states will be put in historical context. Next, the thesis will focus on the five-day war of 8 to 12 August. The direct causes of the war will be outlined and the war itself will be described extensively. Also the
1.5 **Hypothesis**

My hypothesis before answering these questions is that Russia was trying to destabilize Georgia through a war over South-Ossetia and the subsequent recognition of South-Ossetia and Abkhazia. This destabilization is deemed necessary for several reasons.

First of all, Russia does not want NATO to come any closer to Russia’s borders. At the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest Georgian and Ukrainian membership was left as a possibility. Russia wanted to stop this possible Georgian inclusion and at all costs. It was as recently as August 4, 2008, that Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said: "We will do everything possible to prevent the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO."\(^5\)

Secondly, Russia wants to stop US and EU interference in Georgia. The West has invested billions of dollars in aid programs in Georgia. The democracy spread towards the Russian borders is being considered as a threat for Russian security. Russia hopes that the destabilisation will halt these programs. Further investment in Georgia could become too volatile, making it less attractive for the Western states to devote any more time and money to these programs.

Finally, with the destabilization of Georgia, its role as the energy transit corridor is at risk. Azerbaijan and the Central Asian countries will look for more stability and thus to Russia for its energy transit to the West. Russia therefore creates more leverage over the Western energy supply, which has been dominant in its foreign policy.

1.6 **Methodology**

In my thesis I will make use of a variety of sources. First and foremost, academic sources will be used. However, since the subject is rather current, other sources are necessary to come to a complete analysis. Therefore, also NGO reports and newspapers will be used, especially in the research of the five-day war and the recognition of Abkhazia and South-Ossetia.

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\(^{5}\) Thomas de Waal, ‘South-Ossetia, the Avoidable Tragedy’ *Open Democracy* 12-08-2008 p. 3
Chapter 2: Russia-Georgia relations in historical perspective

2.1 Georgian inclusion

Russian-Georgian relations began during the mid 18th century, when the Russian empire started to concentrate on the Caucasus.6 With the Treaty of Georgievsk, in 1783, the east Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti became a protectorate of the Russian Empire, against the Ottoman oppressors.7 Further Russian control of the ethnically Georgian regions was achieved in 1801 when the Georgian royalty was exiled by the Tsar.8 However, full consolidation of the territory of contemporary Georgia occurred only in 1878, when South-West Georgia (Adjara) was conquered from the Ottoman forces.9

Then in 1918, during the Russian Civil War, Georgia declared independence. However at the end of the civil war, Georgia again lost its sovereignty to the Russians. In 1921, the Bolshevik Red Army invaded the Menshevik Georgia and ended its short-lived independence. Georgia now became part of the Soviet Union Transcaucasian Federation. In 1936, the Transcaucasian Federation was abolished and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (GSSR) became one of the union republics of the USSR. The union republics were part of the Soviet Union as a system of asymmetric federations, consisting of territorial regions with different statuses.10

At first, the Abkhaz people regained autonomy, also in the form of a Socialist Soviet Republic. It had gained this status on the basis of ethnicity and language, connecting it to the northern Caucasian languages such as Chechen, more than to Georgian. Nevertheless in 1931, Abkhazia was demoted to the status of an autonomous republic and was incorporated in the Georgian Union Republic. Adjara, with a majority of Muslim population, also gained the status of an autonomous republic, on the basis of religion rather than ethnicity. The Soviet authorities set up South Ossetia as an Autonomous Oblast within Georgia in 1922, to “provide a political and cultural outlet for those Ossetians living in the south of the Caucasus mountains”.11 Ossetia was therefore divided between a northern part which remained a part of Russia and a southern part that was now part of Georgia. These different regions were

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6 Simon Pardek, ‘In Russia’s Shadow’ The New Presence 2007 Issue 1 Summer p. 49
7 Ibid; 49
8 Herman Pirchner, Reviving greater Russia? : the future of Russia's borders with Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine (Washington DC, 2004) p. 10
9 Ibid; 10
11 Ibid; 487
consequently consolidated into the Union Republic of Georgia and this remained all throughout the Soviet era, until its disintegration in 1991.

2.2 Collapse of the Soviet Union

With the installation of Gorbachev as the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CPSU), a clear shift in Soviet politics took place. In his speech at the 27th Congress of the CPSU, in February-March 1986, he labelled the entire Brezhnev era as “the Epoch of Stagnation” and demanded fundamental changes in the economy along with the ‘democratization’ of Soviet society. The economic as well as social and political reforms commenced under the general name of ‘Perestroika’. Furthermore public opinion was liberalized under the policy of ‘Glasnost’. Next to these internal changes, also a shift was made in the foreign policy of the SU. Seeking to halt the cold war hostilities and be accepted by the Western nations as an equal partner, Gorbachev strived for cooperation with the former Cold War enemies. This emphasis on international cooperation was called ‘New Thinking’.

The policy of liberalization and democratization brought a clear schism within the Communist Party. The old conservative elite, led by Ligachev, were terrified of the growing mobilization of society and weakening of party control. Ultra-reformers like Yeltsin, openly attacked the privileges of the party apparatchiki and wanted the process to go even faster and more democratic. Gorbachev himself was going back and forth between the two sides and therefore missed political conviction.

Opposition started to arise in multiple forms. As usually happens in authoritarian multinational states, the liberalization of the regime and the introduction of democracy led to the rise of nationalist rhetoric. In Georgia, nationalism began to grow with general themes like the distortion of Georgia’s national history, lack of national memory, and the imposition of Russian-Soviet foreign rule. From the beginning of 1989, Georgian nationalism began to grow more radical with increasing demonstrations in the capital.

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14 Suny 1998; 456
16 Zürcher, 2005; 87
With Georgian nationalism flourishing, the Abkhaz population and especially the elites felt increasingly threatened, fearing their cultural and ethnic disappearance within Georgia. Therefore, on March 24, 1989, several thousands of Abkhaz signed the Lykhny Declaration that called for the creation of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia, which implied secession from Georgia. This in turn led the Georgian nationalist movement to demonstrate against this declaration. On April 9, Soviet troops unexpectedly attacked the demonstrators, killing about 20 people. The leaders of this demonstration, among them future president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, were arrested. The deployment of the armed forces in the repression of this popular movement was a severe blow to the image and prestige of the Soviet armed forces. Although Gorbachev did want to expand the rights of the union republics through a new Union Treaty, he was not prepared to allow separation of these republics. Yeltsin however, opposed the use of force to keep union republics in the USSR against their will.

The April 9 demonstrations triggered a radical independence campaign in Georgia. Here Zviad Gamsakhurdia emerged as the popular leader. Meanwhile, in reaction to the heightened nationalism within Georgia, not only Abkhazia, but also South Ossetia demanded more autonomy. In November 1989, the Supreme Soviet of the South Ossetian region voted to upgrade its status to the level of autonomous republic. This was perceived by the Georgians as a step towards secession, causing demonstrations. On November 23, 30,000 Georgian demonstrators were sent to the region’s capital, Tskhinvali. When the demonstrators entered the city, they were blocked by Russian security forces. This in turn led to the formation of militias in South Ossetia, ready to react against such Georgian opposition.

Russian nationalism also began to grow more popular. On February 7, 1990, the Central Committee renounced the party’s monopoly on power. A new political arena was created in which political organizations and parties could compete with the Communists for political power. A power struggle now started to arise between the Union and the Russian federative institutions. In March, Yeltsin was elected to the RSFSR Congress of People’s Deputies and shortly thereafter, he was elected chairman. A declaration on sovereignty was passed in the

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17 Dov Lynch, Engaging Eurasia’s Separatist States. Unresolved Conflicts and De Facto States (Washington DC, 2004) p.27
18 Marples, 2004; 57
19 Vicken Cheterian, War and Peace in the Caucasus (London, 2008) p. 8
21 Lynch, 2004; 30
22 Suny 1998; 474
Congress, where the republican laws were set above all-union laws on the territory of the RSFSR.\(^{23}\)

One month earlier, the Georgian Supreme Soviet had already declared the predominance of its republican laws. It declared Georgia’s sovereignty in March 1990, thereby abolishing all treaties by the Soviet government since 1921.\(^{24}\) On October 28, 1990, the first Georgian multiparty elections were held. Gamsakhurdia’s ‘Round Table Bloc’ won a landslide election, with an overwhelming 53% of the vote. Gamsakhurdia was elected Speaker of the Parliament. He began working on ‘dismantling of the Soviet structure of Georgia and carrying it towards independence’.\(^{25}\) Then, on November 14, he was elected first president.

Gorbachev drafted a new Union Treaty at the end of 1990, in order to confront these forces of nationalism. In this draft however, few powers were transferred to the republics and it failed to take into account the republican sovereignty declarations of the previous six months.\(^{26}\) Gamsakhurdia subsequently declared independence on April 9, 1991. Gorbachev however still tried to keep the union republics inside the USSR by starting up again negotiations on a new Union Treaty. Nevertheless, on April 23, Gorbachev for the first time acknowledged the sovereignty declarations of the republics.

The Russian conservative elite reacted vigorously on Gorbachev’s concessions to the republics.\(^{27}\) In order to circumvent a possible signing of the new Union Treaty, scheduled on August 20, on August 18 a coup was organized by a group of conservative Communists, calling itself the State Committee for the Emergency (GKChP). They condemned the direction in which the Soviet Union had turned and wanted to reinstall Soviet law in all its republics.

Reactions in the republics were mixed. During the August 1991 coup in Moscow, Gamsakhurdia, surprised by the events, declared that he was neutral in relation to the struggle for power in the SU. Then, under pressure from the coup leaders, he subordinated what was supposed to be the Georgian army, the National Guard, to the USSR Ministry of Internal

\(^{23}\) Beissinger, 2002; 411  
\(^{24}\) Zürcher, 2005; 90  
\(^{25}\) Svante Cornell, *Autonomy and Conflict : Ethnoterritoriality and Separatism in the South Caucasus : Cases in Georgia* (Uppsala, 2001) p.157  
\(^{26}\) Beissinger, 2002; 417  
\(^{27}\) Ibid; 425
Affairs. However, The Georgian National Guard, under leadership of Kitovani, refused subordination to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They withdrew the troops from Tbilisi, effectively leaving the president without a military force.

After three days of chaos and noncompliance by both Yeltsin and Gorbachev, the coup leaders gave up. Now all form of legitimacy had been sucked out of the Communist Party and its ideology. In December 1991, the heads of Ukraine, Belorussia and Russia came together and agreed to terminate the USSR and form a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) called the Belavezha Accords. On 25 December Gorbachev officially left his office in the Kremlin, leaving Yeltsin as the sole leader in Russia (figure 2.1).

The situation in Georgia had deteriorated further with the anti government demonstrations by the National Democratic Party in Tbilisi on September 2. The president had obtained wide powers through influencing both parliament and the Supreme Soviet. This was however not welcomed by all political figures. The National Guard, under the leadership of Kitovani, together with former Prime Minister Sigua, who had been fired by Gamsakhurdia for economic policy failures, and Ioselani, a paramilitary leader who was arrested after forming a new party and blockading a Soviet military base, all opposed Gamsakhurdia’s concentration of power. In December, Kitovani’s units of the National Guard together with the paramilitary troops and other protesters began fighting against government troops. This was the beginning of a civil war. Heavy fighting continued and lasted until January 6, 1992, when Gamsakhurdia fled to Armenia. Former Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, was placed in power by a formed Military Council (consisting of Prime Minister Sigua, Kitovani and paramilitary leader Ioseliani) as the new de facto president of Georgia in March 1992.

The liberalization policies of Gorbachev had unleashed the forces of nationalism. Quests for self rule and independence in the republics made the union highly unstable, leading to its inevitable fall. Belligerent efforts to keep the union together had only resulted in an acceleration of the collapse, since the authorities had lost the legitimacy of violence at the end of the Soviet rule. The collapse gave rise to the emergence of new institutional settings, and

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29 Wheatley, 2005; 55
30 Suny, 1998; 484
31 Wheatley, 2005; 56
the building of new states within the former Soviet space. Yeltsin’s focus on the Russian Federation led to a complete negligence of the union republics. These in turn could now become separate nation states. However, the question was how long it would take before the new Russian Federation would realize how much territory was now lost.

2.3 Relations during Yeltsin’s presidency

With the fall of the Soviet Union, Georgia and Russia became two separate states. Its relations now became matters of foreign - instead of domestic - policies. The relations between the two had to be redefined, politically as well as socio-economically. Russia inherited many of the international rights and responsibilities of the USSR but lost a great part of its power status. The CIS now quickly expanded, and almost all states joined this new regional organization. However, next to the Baltics, Georgia did not want to accede. A foreign policy had to be created towards the former Soviet states, and specifically towards Georgia.

In the first period after the fall, a Russian foreign policy course was set out, highly influenced by Western orientation. This specific foreign policy will be termed ‘Westernism’. The new foreign minister Kozyrev created, in extension of Gorbachev’s New Thinking, a policy that was concentrating highly on the Western cooperation through international institutions. The former Soviet republics were seen as a burden for Russia and as a constant drain on Russian resources. Isolationism was therefore deemed necessary.

However, partnership with the West did not bring the expected prosperity. Living standards were dropping due to the policy of shock therapy, and with it the support for the ‘Westernist’ vision. Apart from this, the NATO expansion towards Russia’s borders and military conflict in the periphery, created a sense of insecurity undermining the ‘Westernist’ approach. ‘Westernism’ was challenged by the ‘Civilizationists’, who argued that Russian values were different from those of the West and that these must be spread internationally. The West was interested only in global hegemony and weakening other powerful states. Yet, the most popular challenge came from the tradition of ‘Statism’. This perceived Russia as a sovereign

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32 Cheterian, 2008; 7
33 Andrei P. Tsygankov, Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity (Lanham, 2006) p.58
34 Ibid; 58
35 Ibid; 63
36 Ibid; 67
37 Ibid; 61
state and a great power with specific interests in maintaining stability of the international system, opposing hegemony.\textsuperscript{38} The importance of the former Soviet republics was emphasized by stating it as the main foreign policy concern. This vision was not specifically anti-Western. In contrary to ‘Civilizationism’, pragmatic alliances could be made with anyone.\textsuperscript{39}

Georgia was affected almost immediately by this shift in foreign policy thinking. Since it had two conflict regions that bordered Russia, military action was bound to take place. South Ossetia had been in military conflict with Georgia since early 1991. In the Georgian elections, all regional parties had been banned from participation, effectively excluding the Abkhazian and South Ossetian parties. The regional South Ossetian Soviet had reacted by proclaiming a Democratic Soviet Republic of South Ossetia in September 1990, and had asked Moscow to allow it to accede to the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{40} Fearful that the secessionist demands would spread to its own territory, Moscow refused these demands.\textsuperscript{41} Yet in early December, elections were held in South Ossetia.

The newly elected Georgian parliament reacted in vigour. The elections were declared invalid and its autonomous status was abolished.\textsuperscript{42} On January 5, 1991, 5,000 Georgian paramilitary forces entered Tskhinvali, and attacked the civilian population.\textsuperscript{43} The South Ossetian militias resisted and eventually drove back the Georgian forces to the outskirts of the city. Here the troops surrounded the city and enforced a blockade.

Soviet troops in South Ossetia were deployed to separate the two sides and to broker ceasefire. Nonetheless, Soviet troops had taken part in the fighting on the side of the Ossetian militias, leading to the accusation that Gorbachev had tried to use the Ossetian question as a lever on Georgia to remain within the Union.\textsuperscript{44} This fighting continued until June 1992, when the new Russian Federation decided to make a definitive end to it. Russian foreign policy began to shift away from isolationism to more involvement in the ‘near abroad’. With some sixty thousand refugees fleeing to North Ossetia and heavy fighting spreading to North

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid; 61
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid; 93
\textsuperscript{40} Zürcher, 2005; 92
\textsuperscript{42} Cornell, 2001; 162
\textsuperscript{43} Zürcher, 2005; 92
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid; 162
Ossetia, Russia increased pressure on Georgia.\textsuperscript{45} A ceasefire was agreed in Sochi (the Dagonmys agreement) and a Russian-led trilateral peacekeeping operation was deployed.\textsuperscript{46}

However, with the cease-fire agreement between Georgia and South Ossetia only barely signed, a new increase in violence arose in Abkhazia. Abkhazia was, by the summer of 1992, separated from the rest of Georgia by the pro-Gamsakhurdia uprisings in Western Georgia. The Abkhazian leadership saw a window of opportunity in the Georgian civil war and declared Abkhazia a sovereign state.\textsuperscript{47} The supporters of the ousted president, backed by the Georgian population in this region, regrouped in Western Georgia and Abkhazia.\textsuperscript{48} In retaliation, Georgian forces entered Abkhazia to root out the Gamsakhurdia supporters among the Georgian population and captured the capital Sukhumi. Georgia thus wanted to terminate both pro-Gamskhurdia, as well as Abkhazian secessionist insurgencies.

Nevertheless, the war turned out differently. With support of volunteers from the North Caucasus and with alleged Russian arms, coming from Russian military supporters, the Georgians were forced back. In September 1993, the Gamsakhurdia supporters on the one side and the Abkhaz forces on the other attacked the Georgian forces and won back Sukhumi.\textsuperscript{49}

During this conflict, Russia had formulated its specific foreign policy in the Foreign Policy Concept of April 1993, emphasizing the importance of the ‘near abroad’.

\textit{“The issue of Russia’s relations with the Commonwealth states and other countries of the ‘near abroad’ is directly linked with the fate of the Russian reforms, and the prospects for overcoming the crisis in the country and ensuring the well-being of Russia and Russian citizens.”} \textsuperscript{50}

This foreign policy was a clear move towards the Statist vision. The importance of involving international institutions was reduced, and the UN was asked to grant Russia special peacekeeping power in the region. NATO was increasingly seen as invasive and its plans for

\textsuperscript{45} Donaldson and Nogee, 2005; 199  
\textsuperscript{46} Lynch, 2004; 30  
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid; 96  
\textsuperscript{48} Natali Tocci, ‘The EU and Conflict Resolution in Turkey and Georgia’ \textit{Journal of Common Market Studies} 2008 Vol. 46. No.4 p.880  
\textsuperscript{49} Zürcher, 2005; 95  
\textsuperscript{50} Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation 1993 in Andrei Melville and Tatiana Shakleina (eds.), \textit{Russian Foreign Policy in Transition. Concepts and Realities} (Budapest, 2005) p. 27
eastwards expansion were looked at suspiciously. The veto right in the OSCE made the organization more suitable for Russian interests. The CIS was given the highest priority by Russia, trying to establish it as a strong security and political alliance.\textsuperscript{51} The ‘near abroad’ had become the primary focus. Yeltsin argued that Russia should maintain and formalize its military presence in Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Central Asia.\textsuperscript{52}

Meanwhile, Shevardnadze was thus confronted with military defeat against forces loyal to Gamsakhurdia, and secessionists in Abkhazia.\textsuperscript{53} The Abkhaz attack on Sukhumi led to a Georgian defeat and contributed to the fear of Georgian disintegration. Shevardnadze asked Russia for support against both forces. In return for Russian assistance, Shevardnadze had to agree to join the CIS and accept three Russian military bases on Georgian soil, with troop strength of 23,000.\textsuperscript{54} Russia also acquired access to ports on the Black Sea, most importantly Poti. The UN meanwhile, was not prepared to send forces to the conflict area and suggested a CIS peacekeeping force, with UN monitors. Russia could now singlehandedly deploy its troops on Georgian territory with UN approval. In the peacekeeping task, however, it did not go any further than to pressure both sides to negotiate. These did not lead to satisfactory agreements between either South Ossetia nor Abkhazia towards Georgia, which in turn was highly dissatisfied with Russian inaction. Russia now had secured the borders of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia without effectively solving the conflicts. These thus became the so called ‘frozen conflicts’ (figure 2.2)

But at the same time, Russian dreams of renewed influence in the region were endangered by another Caucasus conflict (figure 2.3). The conflict with Chechnya clearly exposed the uncontrolled migration flows, uncontrollable secessionist regimes and criminal activity within Russian borders.\textsuperscript{55} Russia’s disproportional reaction did show that the ‘Westernist’ vision was definitely past tense. Internal security considerations predominated in the first Chechen war (December ’94–August ’96), unpopular both domestically and international.\textsuperscript{56} Nevertheless,

\textsuperscript{52} Tsygankov, 2006; 83
\textsuperscript{53} Donaldson and Nogee, 2005; 199
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid; 199
\textsuperscript{55} Devdariani, 2005; 167
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid; 167
the Chechen campaign failed and it clearly exposed the weakness of Russia, politically as well as militarily.57

The identity of the new Georgia and the new Russia were becoming more and more in conflict with each other. Russia was the ‘other’ against which Georgia wanted to free itself.58 A move towards the West was one of the forces that should help this process of separation. Russia on the other hand, lamented the collapse of the empire, and wanted to move Georgia further back into its ‘sphere of influence’. After the Russian parliamentary elections in December 1995, in which the nationalists and communists won, Primakov became the new foreign policy minister. He allied himself with the Statist as well as the ‘Civilizationists’. The new foreign policy minister wanted a ‘geopolitical equilibrium’, and this meant that Russia was to remain a sovereign state with power to control its ‘near abroad’ and to resist hegemonic ambitions elsewhere in the world.59

In Georgia, presidential elections were held in November 1995. Here Shevardnadze became president after the new constitution was ratified. These elections gave him democratic and constitutional legitimacy that he lacked before. In the same year Georgia began its economic recovery, with a modest rise of 2.5% in GDP in 1995, and a more promising 10% in 1996 and 1997.60 With this new presidential legitimacy and economic growth, Georgian authorities moved towards increased relations with international organizations in an effort to contain Russian influence. First of all, Georgia became increasingly involved with NATO. Already in March 1994 it joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. The PfP programme was “designed to promote civilian control over the military; enable joint operations of NATO led peacekeeping and humanitarian missions; encourage transparency in defence planning; and open communications among PfP countries”.61 In 1995 this cooperation expanded to NATO training programmes in the NATO School in Oberammergau (Germany) and NATO Defence College in Rome (Italy). In 1996 further cooperation with NATO was established by submitting to the first Individual Partnership Programme (IPP).

57 Ibid; 171
58 Ibid; 160
59 Tsygankov, 2006; 96
60 Wheatley 2005; 103
Russia perceived this as a Western aim of diminishing Russian influence in the region.62 Many in Russia saw NATO expansion as the most serious foreign policy challenge. Relations between Russia and NATO had already become troublesome over the air strikes in Bosnia in April 1994. At a December meeting of Foreign Ministers, relations deteriorated further when it became clear that states who signed PfP could be considered for NATO membership.63 Primakov however, recognized that the expansion of the alliance became inevitable and that Russia had to adapt to this new situation.64 He indicated specific conditions under which enlargement into Central Europe might be acceptable. Nevertheless enlargement to any of the former Soviet republics was ruled out altogether.65 In 1997 a ‘Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation’ was set up, including a Permanent Joint Council (PJC). The goal of PJC was to enhance relations between Russia and NATO and build a level of trust.66

These improved relations were to be damaged again with the Kosovo crisis in 1999. Without Russian consultation and a UN mandate, NATO had bombed the Russian-supported Serbs. This was against the Founding Act and the PJC therefore had lost its credibility. Meanwhile, Georgia was increasingly involved with NATO and during the September 1999 elections Shevardnadze even stated that Georgia would become a NATO member within five years.67 Georgia also made more and more use of individual US military and economic assistance. Russia perceived this as hegemonic ambitions by the West, predominantly the US, and these tendencies should be balanced by Russia, according to Primakov.

G(U)UAM was another Georgian effort to contain Russian influence in Georgia. This regional organization was set up in 1996-1997 by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. It was, broadly speaking, an attempt to form an informal alliance of CIS countries who collectively wanted to resist Russian influence.68 In April 1999, at the NATO’s Fiftieth Anniversary Summit in Washington, Uzbekistan acceded to the organization and it thus became GUUAM. GUUAM wanted to “uphold the territorial integrity of its members, reject

63 Martin Smith, Russia and NATO since 1991. From Cold War through Cold Peace to Partnership? (New York, 2006) p. 64
64 Tsygankov, 2006; 100
65 Smith, 2006; 68
66 Ibid; 72
67 Bhatty and Bronson, 2000; 131
separatism, fight religious terrorism and expect common commitment to prevent an arms build-up in conflict areas". 69

This was most of all directed against Russian interference in the conflict areas, such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russian leaders indeed interpreted GUUAM as an unfriendly NATO-led alliance of states. 70 Furthermore, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan simultaneously quit the CIS Collective Security Treaty and therefore terminated military cooperation with Russia. 71

New discoveries of oil and gas in the Caspian Sea in the mid- and late 1990s also stimulated new developments. 72 Georgia together with Azerbaijan first began establishing the Baku-Supsa pipeline in 1996 with US investments, transporting oil to the Black Sea. This pipeline would count as an alternative to the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline and would thereby circumvent Russia in the oil transport from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea. More importantly, in November 1999, an agreement was signed on the building of another oil pipeline using Georgia as an energy transit corridor, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline (figure 2.4). The BTC was a unique project in which oil fields in the Caspian Sea could be directly connected to the Black Sea without crossing Russia. 73 Caspian resources could now flow, not only to Black Sea ports, but also directly to the Turkish port of Ceyhan. 74 The shareholders of the pipeline were dominantly Western companies, hereby challenging Russian influence. Later also the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP, also called the BTE pipeline) project was started, that would transport gas via the same route as the BTC, ending only in Erzurum.

At the end of the Yeltsin reign, Georgia had tried to move itself away from Russia as far as possible. It had welcomed Western organizations and joined international institutions to balance Russian influence. Energy alternatives were started to decrease dependence on Russian energy. Also, within the CIS Georgia displayed its suspicion against Russian motives. 75 It therefore was the greatest non-participator, refusing to join many of its bodies. 76

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69 Ibid; 330
70 Devdariani, 2005; 172
71 de Waal, 2005; 330
73 Ibid; 22
74 Ibid; 22
Nevertheless, Russia was not at all ready to abandon Georgia. It still had large military presence by four remaining Russian military bases on Georgian territory (Gudauta and Vaziani: allegedly closed in 1999 and 2001, and Akhalkalaki and Batumi: its removal to be negotiated separately and on a longer term) Furthermore, it still had peacekeeping missions in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, with only minor UN and OSCE interference. Georgia was highly dependent on Russian energy, since 85% of its energy needs were coming from Russia. A continued Russian military presence also allowed Moscow to be closer to controlling, or at the very least, influencing the operating of the BTC pipeline. Moscow thus had remained true to its Foreign Policy Concept of 1993, and Georgia was its primary example.

With the coming of Putin into office, first as prime minister and ad interim president in 1999 and as president after the 2000 elections, Russian foreign policy was again redefined. The economic crisis of 1998 had had great influence on the frustration of the Russian population on its foreign policy. In the year 2000, when Putin became the new president, two new important documents on Russian foreign policy were approved. The National Security Concept and Foreign Policy Concept became the starting point for Putin’s foreign policy.

2.4 Relations under Putin

Already during the first month of his prime minister post, an import development took place in the Caucasus that led to a reformulation of Russia’s foreign policy. In August 1999, the Islamic International Brigade, consisting of Chechen separatists, invaded neighbouring republic Dagestan. Next to this Moscow accused Chechen separatists of the bombing of apartment blocks in Moscow, Volgodonsk and Buinaksk. These events created a huge demand in Russia for a more protective state authority. In May 2000, Russia regained control of much of Chechnya and installed a pro-Kremlin regime. However, this was not the end of the war, since the separatist militias kept fighting.

During the second Chechen war, relations with Georgia were also affected. The most important issue was the Kodori Gorge. This was a Georgian-populated enclave within

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76 Ibid; 401
77 Brent Griffith, ‘Back Yard Politics: Russia’s Foreign Policy Toward the Caspian Basin’ Demokratizatsiya 1998 vol:6 No.2 p.435
78 Ibid; 435
79 Lilia Shevtsova, Russia, Lost in Transition. The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies. (Washington, 2007) p.37
Abkhazia and a refuge for paramilitary troops, including Chechen warriors. Russia blamed Georgia for aiding terrorists, while Georgia accused Russia of bombing the gorge and breaching Georgian airspace. Russia imposed a visa requirement on persons crossing the Russian borders, particularly affecting the 700,000 Georgians living in Russia, whose earnings accounted for 25% of Georgia’s income. On the other hand, Russia enhanced its relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia by simplifying its visa regime and even accepting applications for Russian citizenship. Also, through the winter of 2000, Russian gas suppliers repeatedly cut off gas deliveries to Georgia, using its energy power for political gains.

In January 2000, a new Russian National Security Concept was approved. The main threats in the international sphere were described in this document. First of all, the Russian weakened economy was seen as a threat to its security. Among other things, it triggered separatist aspirations in some regions and therefore caused political instability and a weakened Russian economy. In contrast with the policy of Primakov, economic policy was to become a dominant subject within foreign policy.

However, much emphasis was still placed on the threats in Russia’s ‘near abroad’. In this concept, the “strengthening of military-political blocs and unions”, above all NATO, were perceived as threats; as well as the “possible emergence of foreign military bases and large military contingents near the Russian borders”. Furthermore, the decline of the integration processes within the CIS was seen as problematic. Finally, the “emergence and escalation of conflicts in proximity to the state borders of the Russian Federation and external borders of member states of CIS” were mentioned.

In the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept, the ‘near abroad’ was also given high priority. Putin had portrayed the break-up of the Soviet Union, “the major geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century”. The concept generally aimed at “creation of favourable external conditions for the steady development of Russia”, and “forming a good-neighbourly belt along the perimeter of

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80 Nygren, 2008; 134
81 Donaldson and Nogee, 2005; 202
82 Devdariani, 2005; 177
84 Ibid; 134
85 Ibid; 134
86 Ibid; 134
Russia’s borders”, while “promoting the elimination and prevention of potential hotbeds of tension and conflicts in the regions closest to the Russian Federation”.88 In addition, the concept stated that “the foreign policy was to ensure the reliable security of the country”, “preserve and strengthen its sovereignty”, “its territorial integrity”, and “its strong and respected position in the world community as a great power”.89

Both documents were very much applicable to Georgia. As a member of CIS, together with its problems with the secessionist regions, as well as the NATO enlargement issue and foreign military engagement, Georgia scored high on the list of priority issues in Russia’s foreign policy.

The events on September 11, 2001, brought further changes to Russian foreign policy. The developments provided Putin with a formidable opportunity to boost his domestic and international position and to further emphasize his notion of security threats.90 Putin created an “ideology of pragmatism” and “self-concentration” which combined both ‘Westernist’ and ‘Statist’ influences.91 He did not want to copy Western institutions like Kozyrev, but he did emphasize Western cooperation. On the other hand he “stressed patriotism, a strong state and social solidarity within the Russian Federation”, thus also using ‘Statist’ and even ‘Civilizationist’ ideology.92 Putin primarily highlighted the need for Russia to modernize and grow economically. Putin therefore understood Russia’s weakness and the necessity to get along with major players in the international system.93 The great power balancing was now temporarily put aside and even support, although highly pragmatic, was given to the US struggle against terrorism.

In December 2001, the situation at the Pankisi Gorge caused relations to seriously deteriorate again between Russia and Georgia. The Pankisi Gorge is a valley bordering Chechnya and Georgia (figure 2.5). Russia accused Georgia of aiding Chechen terrorism through the lack of action against Chechen use of the Gorge as a base for transit, training and shipments of arms and financing. Russia perceived this as “an acute threat to the national security of Russia”,

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88 The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation’ Approved by the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, June 28, 2000 http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm
89 Ibid
90 Tsygankov, 2006; 129
91 Ibid; 129
92 Ibid; 129
and labelled the lack of action “an unfriendly act against Russia”.94 Relations had already
gotten worse in June 2001, when Georgia had held a large-scale multinational military
training, jointly with NATO and partner countries, called the Cooperative Partner – 2001.
This move towards NATO was, as already stated, perceived a threat, also in the new National
Security Conception.

Soon after the events of September 11, it became clear that the US would pursue military
action in Afghanistan. The South Caucasus and Central Asia were highly geostrategical
regions, due to the proximity to Afghanistan.95 Georgia had granted NATO army docking and
landing rights, refuelling facilities, and overflight rights. More importantly it had initiated a
train-and-equip program for the Georgian military which was also used for the Pankisi Gorge
crisis.96 Putin at first accepted the US troops on Georgian territory and its aid in the Pankisi
crisis. However, in September 2002, tensions between Russia and Georgia peaked again, after
new fighting erupted in the Pankisi area. The Kremlin threatened military action against
Georgia, if Tbilisi did not eliminate the Chechen rebels in the Pankisi Gorge.97 For Tbilisi, the
tensions with Russia also turned into a test of America’s loyalty to Georgia. The US
supported Georgia, stating that it opposed any unilateral military action by Russia inside
Georgia.98 The Russian threats were most likely used to keep US interference in Georgia as
superficial as possible, thinking that the US would not want a conflict with Russia over
Georgia.

Russia further intensified its relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia by a new Law on
Citizenship, passed in May 2002. Although the law made Russian citizenship in general
harder to obtain, for Abkhaz and South Ossetians, it simplified application procedures.99 By
the end of 2002, over 50,000 Abkhaz had received a passport and in South Ossetia almost
90% of South Ossetia’s population of less than 100,000, used this opportunity to acquire
Russian citizenship.100 In December, to much Georgian protest, Russia reopened a rail link
between Sochi and Sukhumi, enhancing economic ties and tourism.

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94 Nygren, 2008; 126
95 Cornell, 2001; 113
96 Ibid; 113
97 Natalia Antelava, ‘No War Blues in Georgia’ Transitions Online issue: 03/25/2003 p.2
98 Nygren, 2008; 126
99 Antonenko, 2005; 240
100 Ibid; 240
Georgia meanwhile kept close ties with the US, and in the case of Iraq; Shevardnadze was the only leader in the Caucasus who publicly declared his support. Shevardnadze stated:

“Georgia is a small country and the United States supports Georgia’s many efforts in many fields. Georgia will therefore always support the United States”. 101

Contrasting to this, Shevardnadze struck an important energy deal with Russia’s Unified Energy System (RAO-UES) instead of assigning the US AES energy company. Among others, RAO-UES would acquire 75% of the shares of the Tbilisi electricity distribution network and two 600-megawatt plants. 102 The Georgian government had also secretly signed a 25-year agreement on the supply of gas with Gazprom, Russia’s state-owned gas producer. 103 In return, Gazprom promised the steady supply of natural gas to Georgian customers and the renovation of its gas pipelines. 104 This would stimulate Georgian economy and secure deliveries of cheap gas for Georgia, especially important with the approaching Georgian parliamentary elections. 105 This showed both sides were highly pragmatic in their mutual relations.

Nevertheless, in general, relations between Russia and Georgia were tense. Russia was not at all happy with the growing US and NATO interference. In its foreign policy this was perceived as one of the main threats to Russian security. The Pankisi Gorge was another factor for tension between the two states. Despite the fact that terrorism was high on the Russian security list, the Pankisi Gorge was also used as a means of threatening the US for its interference. Not only military, but also Caspian energy interests were pulling the US towards Georgia. The US policy of ‘multiple pipelines’, the active pursuit of a diversified energy supply, was against Russian interest of its energy transportation monopoly. Putin had expanded the state control over the energy sector to use the energy flows as a powerful political instrument. 106 The Georgian role as an energy transit corridor meant that Russia would both lose political leverage as well as economic revenue. With the rapidly rising oil prices this economic loss became increasingly significant.

101 Antelava, 2003; 2
102 Devdariani, 2005; 196
105 Devdariani, 2005; 177
106 Baev, 2008; 30
Georgia on the other hand was stressing the fact that Russia still had troops on Georgian territory, using this as a political-military leverage tool. More importantly, it was contributing to the situation of an impasse between the two breakaway regions and the Georgian authorities. By aiding South Ossetia and Abkhazia through military protection, economic assistance and even outright Russian citizenship, the situation was going nowhere near dissolution of the two regions into Georgian territory.

2.5 Relations after the Rose Revolution
In November 2003, parliamentary elections were held in Georgia. Opposition had grown stronger over the last period of Shevardnadze’s presidency. The economy, since 2001, had been declining and corruption was widespread. Democratic institutions had been set up over the years, but most of them only formally. However there was an active independent media that was critical towards the regime. These factors caused growing dissatisfaction among the population. During the parliamentary elections, which had been fraudulent and chaotic, the discontentment with the Georgian authorities reached its peak and led to a major protest, labelled the Rose Revolution.

The opposition was led by Mikheil Saakashvili, a Western oriented politician, backed by the US. The demonstrations eventually led to the resignation of Shevardnadze as president of Georgia on November 23, 2003. On that same day, Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov had mediated a meeting between the two, and had thereby facilitated Shevardnadze’s peaceful resignation. After the major victory of Saakashvili in the presidential elections that January, he emphasized his willingness to repair relations with Russia. However, his political rhetoric was not so much following Russian interests. First of all, he made it clear that his government would remain firm in demanding the closure of the two remaining Russian military bases. He also swore to restore Georgia’s territorial integrity by establishing control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Finally, he put emphasis on tightening relations with the West through institutions like NATO and the EU.

107 Wheatley, 2005; 165
108 Ibid; 182
109 Devdariani, 2005; 177
Russia perceived the Rose Revolution as a new American effort to influence the post-Soviet space and as a threat to its own influence in the region.\textsuperscript{110} The colour revolutions, where several post-Soviet countries had shifted to a more democratic state structure after mass protest against the corrupt and/or authoritarian governments, also made Russia fear for a democratic opposition spread towards the Russian Federation itself. The increasing Western criticism on Russia’s domestic policies strengthened the idea of the ‘Western democracy’ as a dangerous political model.

Albeit this new situation was against Russian interest, relations did start positive. Russia even supported Georgia with its struggle against the other rebellious region in the South, Adjara. Here, the Russians successfully assisted Georgia in restoring presidential rule by offering the Adjaran political leader a safe haven in Moscow, in return for his retreat after mass demonstrations and use of militia forces. Russian-Georgian relations were to be drafted in a Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness, Cooperation and Mutual Security. In the talks about this treaty, however, disagreement soon arose on elementary security issues. First of all Russia continued to insist on a clause prohibiting the deployment of any foreign military forces within Georgia.\textsuperscript{111} More broadly, there was a clear disagreement on Georgia’s right of strategic partnership and military cooperation with third countries.\textsuperscript{112} Georgia again criticized Russia for fuelling separatism in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. These issues were not solved throughout the treaty talks held in 2004 and 2005.

In June 2004, Georgia started to increase the efforts to restore control over South Ossetia. It first of all established an alternative pro-Georgian government for South Ossetia in Tbilisi. Also, Georgia attempted to stop the illegal economic activities much needed for South Ossetian autonomy.\textsuperscript{113} Following an operation launched by the Georgian governments to restrain the smuggling across South Ossetia, clashes began to erupt between Georgian forces and South Ossetian separatists with numerous deaths on both sides.\textsuperscript{114} Although the two sides managed to separate themselves in a ceasefire deal on August 13, provocations and blockades

\textsuperscript{110} Tsygankov, 2006; 152
\textsuperscript{111} Nygren, 2008; 123
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid; 123
\textsuperscript{114} Svante E. Cornell, Johanna Poppianeveski and Niklas Nilsson, ‘Russia’s War in Georgia: Causes and Implications for Georgia and the World’ \textit{Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program August} 2008, Policy Paper p.5
continued on both sides. The Dagomys agreement was thereby breached, consequently thawing the ‘frozen conflict’.

Unexpectedly, in May 2005, an agreement was found between Georgia and Russia on the withdrawal of the remaining two Russian military bases. Putin had asked Saakashvili’s reassurance that no foreign bases would be established in Georgia.\textsuperscript{115} Compromises had been struck and Russia would move the troops. However, two alternative bases close to Georgia (on Russian territory) had to be built first before Russia would actually move the troops. The troop withdrawal from the base at Akhalkalaki would be completed in October 2007 and from Batumi at the end of 2008.\textsuperscript{116}

In that same month the first oil was pumped from Baku, making the BTC pipeline operational. In 2006, the completion of the South Caucasus Pipeline also allowed for the export of Azerbaijani gas independently from Russia.\textsuperscript{117} Russia consequently lost its effective monopoly on the export of Caspian energy resources.\textsuperscript{118} As a result, Russian economy was directly hit, which was considered a threat to its security. For Georgia these pipelines meant both less dependence on Russian energy, as well as much required economic revenues. Also its relations with the West hereby gaining importance, since the US and Europe needed Georgia for its alternative energy transport. Georgia was consequently one step further in its struggle for more independence economically as well as politically.

This greater independence from Russia was emphasized in the tensions that followed in September 2006. Tbilisi had arrested four Russian officers on spying charges. Russian troops in Georgia were put on ‘high alert’ and were ordered to “shoot to kill if provoked” while defending Moscow's two remaining military bases.\textsuperscript{119} Next to this, Georgia had made another step towards NATO in September. NATO had decided to integrate Georgia more closely by approving of the phase of ‘intensified dialogue’. This meant that Georgia would integrate

\textsuperscript{115} Nygren, 2008; 132
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid; 132
\textsuperscript{117} Heidi Kjærnet, ‘The Energy Dimension of Azerbaijani–Russian Relations: Maneuvering for Nagorno-Karabakh’ \textit{Russian Analytical Digest} 2009 No.65 p.3
\textsuperscript{118} Cornell, Tsereteli and Socor, ‘Geostrategic Implications of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline’ in S. Frederick Starr and Svante E. Cornell (eds.) \textit{The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West} (Washington DC, 2005) p.18
\textsuperscript{119} Indans, 2007; 131
closer into NATO and was viewed as a significant step from partnership to candidate membership.\textsuperscript{120}

Soon after, Russia started to ban the import of consumer products like Georgian wine and mineral water (two of Georgia’s leading exports to Russia for decades), based on failing the Russian health standards.\textsuperscript{121} Furthermore, Russia shut down transport and postal services, thereby almost completely shutting Georgia from the outside world.\textsuperscript{122} Even within Russia, Georgians were punished by expelling a vast amount of them, who were living and trading in Russia, even those with proper documentation.

Russia also showed its power through the manipulation of the energy supply. That winter, Gazprom demanded a more than doubling in the price of natural gas (from US $110 to $235 per 1000 bcm) from Georgia, together with Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan.\textsuperscript{123} Gazprom also demanded that it be given ownership of Georgia’s domestic pipelines, among which the BTC and SCP pipelines. This was however refused by Georgia.

Undoubtedly, such pressure hurt Georgia. Despite this pressure however, Georgia showed a staggering 10\% annual economic growth.\textsuperscript{124} Moreover, the gas cut-off was quickly resolved by altering its gas supply, primarily from Azerbaijan.\textsuperscript{125} Russian economic and energy leverage had thus lost a part of its power. Nevertheless, Russia still had a vast amount of military influence, especially in the case of the breakaway regions. Here Saakashvili desperately tried to regain influence and reunify the two regions with the rest of Georgia. This again proved to be difficult due to the resistance of the two regions and Russian interference. UN mediated talks were held frequently, but a solution was impossible to establish. In January 2005, yet another draft plan on the status of both regions was presented. Sakaashvili now promised the regions more autonomy. However, he also indicated that Georgia might use military force if the conflict was not solved. Russia had already stressed that, since many

\textsuperscript{120} Dmitry Sidorov, ‘Georgia Launches Accession Campaign- NATO Prepares to Admit First CIS Country into its Ranks’ \textit{Kommersant} 25-09-2006 in Ana K. Niedermaier (eds.), \textit{Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia’s Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia} (Minneapolis, 2008) p.247

\textsuperscript{121} Lapidus, 2007; 152


\textsuperscript{123} Heidi Kjærnet, 2009; 3

\textsuperscript{124} Goldman, 2008; 150

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid; 150
inhabitants of South Ossetia had acquired Russian citizenship, it would be forced to intervene if Georgia would attempt to resolve the conflict by force.\footnote{Nygren, 2008; 145}

Georgia was still opinionated that Russia was supporting separatism and occupying Georgian territory and therefore, in early 2006, Georgian parliament voted for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces, at least from South Ossetia. Georgian parliament expressed disapproval of the inaction by the Russian peacekeepers, allowing South Ossetians to build up militarily. However, Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, stated that only consensus by the two opposing parties on Russian withdrawal could lead to the exit of the Russian peacekeeping forces.\footnote{Vladimir Novikov, ‘Peace Removal Operation’ \textit{Kommersant} 08-02-2006 in Niedermaier (eds.) 2008; 212} In May, Georgian Special Forces even entered the South Ossetian conflict-zone and thereby confronted the Russian peacekeeping troops directly. This was a clear breach of all agreements made between the parties involved.

Russia too executed military actions, although these were not openly admitted. Russian helicopters were sighted in the bombing of the Kodori Gorge in March 2007. This was near the temporary headquarters of the Government of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic, the ‘official’ Georgian approved government. Moreover, Georgia had accused Russia of violating its airspace and bombing Georgian territory just 65 kilometers west of the capital.\footnote{Mikhail Vignansky, ‘Bomb Frenzy – Tbilisi Accused Russian Pilots of ‘Naked Agression’ \textit{Vremya Novostei} 8-08-2007 in Niedermaier (eds.) 2008; 283} Again Russia denied responsibility.

In the meantime, Georgian opposition towards their own government was growing. In early November, demonstrations grew larger against an allegedly corruptive government and president. Although initially peaceful, on November 6, riots broke out and Georgian authorities violently suppressed the thousands-strong demonstrations. Sakaashvili decided to move forward the presidential elections to January 5, 2008. Also a referendum on early parliamentary elections (from October to April/May 2008) resulted in a win for the opposition. Saakashvili indirectly accused Badri Patarkatsishvili, a Georgian/Russian oligarch, of building a lie factory, like he had done in Yeltsin’s second election campaign.\footnote{Olga Allenova and Vladimir Novikov, ‘Russian Oligarchs are Building a Lie Factory in Georgia’ \textit{Kommersant} 06-10-2007 in Niedermaier (eds.) 2008; 301} He also blamed the Russian authorities for the opposition campaign. Nevertheless, despite a large opposition, Saakashvili was re-elected in January 2008.
Relations up to 2008 had thus deteriorated yet again. After a promising start with the new Georgian president Saakashvili in 2004, relations had turned sour quickly. The issue over the ‘frozen conflicts’ could not be resolved, especially since Saakashvili was strongly committed to reunify the regions. Russia on the other hand, was not at all intending to leave these regions, and used its peacekeeping trump card in the argument. Another important factor was Georgia’s intensified relations with both NATO and the US in specific. Finally, the role of Georgia as an energy transit corridor had now taken real shape with the finishing of both the BTC and the SCP. Russia was not at all content with the decreasing economic revenue and its reduced political leverage due to the demise of its energy transit monopoly.

In the next chapter the last stages up to the war will be described. From the first moths of 2008, relations deteriorated even further. The pinnacle of the deterioration was reached during the war in August 2008. The so called ‘five-day war’ and its aftermath will be discussed in full length in the next chapter.
Chapter 3: The five-day war and Russian recognition

3.1 The road to war

During the last stages before the five-day war (August 8 to 12, 2008), two important events caused tensions to increase even further between Russia and Georgia. The Russian presidential elections also took place during this period. These factors will first be explored before discussing the subject of the five-day war.

The first event that further upset the relations between Russia and Georgia was the declaration of independence by the Kosovo Assembly, on February 17, 2008. This declaration was largely recognized by the international community, among them the US, United Kingdom, France and Germany. However, Russia was not at all pleased with this action and its international approval. For years it had contested possible independence of Kosovo, referring to the lack of universal principles in the recognition of such types of breakaway states. On the day before the independence, Russia promised the leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to support separatists’ ambitions if Kosovo declared its independence and was recognized by the West. Shortly after the declaration, Putin therefore remarked before a CIS summit in Moscow:

“The Kosovo precedent is a terrible precedent. Essentially it is blowing up the whole system of international relations which has evolved over the past not even decades but centuries. Undoubtedly, it might provoke a whole chain of unpredictable consequences. Those who are doing this, relying exclusively on force and having their satellites submit to their will, are not calculating the results of what they are doing. Ultimately this is a stick with two ends, and one day the other end of this stick will hit them on their heads.”

This clearly referred to the fear of a domino effect, believing that other secessionist regions (like Chechnya) would use this precedent as a source of legitimacy and would therefore seek independence of their own. On the other hand, Russia actively used this argument itself in the efforts to move away these two breakaway republics from Georgia. In March, Putin’s government lifted the remaining sanctions against Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while the Duma held hearings on the recognition of these two breakaway regions. It was decided then that the matter should be considered by president and government. The parliament might

131 Ó Tuathail, 2008; 683
132 Ibid; 683
even take a harder line, depending on the NATO summit in Bucharest, where Georgia’s position concerning the Membership Action Plan (MAP) would be discussed. Russia’s parliamentary deputies stated that, in regarding Georgia’s actions against Abkhazia and South Ossetia, “the only way to protect the residents of regions was to reinforce the Russian peacekeeping force there and take other steps to ensure peace and security in the region”. The Russian discussion on independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was thus directly linked to the status of Georgia towards NATO.

This Duma decision of course heightened the tensions between Russia and Georgia. This Georgian response was quite intense and indirect threats were now made on both sides, increasing the tension even further.

“The Russian Federation had lost all political, legal and moral right to lay claim the role of a neutral and objective mediator in the resolution of the conflicts in Georgia. Any steps (pertaining to the format of the peacekeeping operations) taken without consulting with the Georgian authorities would be seen as an aggression against the Georgian state, with all the ensuing consequences”.

The other major factor that again became clear was that the increased tensions between Russia and Georgia (and the West), were caused by the possible further approaching of NATO to Russian borders. On April 2-4, 2008, NATO organized a summit in Bucharest where, among other issues, Georgian and Ukrainian membership were discussed. During the Bucharest Summit, the US called for the acceptance of Georgia into the MAP. MAP illustrates the willingness to accept a certain country for future membership, if certain conditions are met. MAP “assists those countries which wish to join the Alliance in their preparations by providing advice, assistance and practical support on all aspects of NATO membership”. Georgia and Ukraine were not accepted into MAP, due to opposition of Germany and France, who feared Russian opposition. However, due to heavy US support for Georgia, NATO did agree that these countries would become members of NATO in the future.

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133 Olga Allenova, ‘State Duma Trumps Bid- For Georgia to Join NATO’ Kommersant 22-03-2008 in Niedermaier (eds.) 2008; 328
134 Ibid; 329
Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries’ applications for MAP. Therefore we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to their MAP applications.”

This NATO statement on Georgian and Ukrainian membership really angered the Russian leadership. Putin stated on April 4, 2008, at that same NATO summit in Bucharest;

“A powerful military block appearing near our borders will be perceived as a direct threat to the security of our country, statements claiming this process is not directed against Russia are not satisfactory to us”.

Furthermore, Moscow openly admitted that it would do everything in its power to make sure that neither Georgia, nor Ukraine ever got into NATO.

Russia was infuriated with the US, who had first recognized Kosovo’s independence and now stimulated Georgian and Ukrainian membership. On April 16, Putin directed that formal legal relations would be established between Russia and the two separatist enclaves. Georgia was thus punished for its membership ambitions, in the way Russia had already announced earlier, through its breakaway regions. Georgia now appealed to the international community, demanding that it should condemn the Russian approaches towards the two conflict zones. However, the US, NATO and the EU all stated that they were concerned with the Russian moves, but did not go any further. Georgia had intentionally refrained from further threats in order to avoid further pressure from Russia and to win the support of the international community.

On May 7, 2008, at the height of the deteriorated relations between Russia and Georgia, Russia inaugurated a new president, Dmitry Medvedev. During the election campaign of Medvedev, not much was said about specific foreign policy issues, however the ‘great power status’ was an important subject. Medvedev had been hand-picked by Putin and was

139 Tuathail, 2008; 684
considered a Putin loyalist. In his speech accepting his candidacy for president in December 2007, Medvedev already indicated that thanks to Putin’s policies Russia had returned to its rightful place within the international community. Medvedev further noted that Russia would no longer tolerate being “told off like a naughty pupil”. Russia saw itself as a great power and expected to be dealt with as such. Medvedev thus shared Putin’s commitment to a “strong and sovereign Russia”. As the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept, the new 2008 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, approved in July, emphasized that Russia saw relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States as a top priority. So both the great power concept, as well as the significance of the ‘near abroad’, remained dominant issues in foreign policy under Medvedev. In addition, Putin, as Prime Minister, was still capable of influencing foreign policy.

Also in May of that year, Georgia held its parliamentary elections. The United National Movement, founded by Saakashvili, again got a majority of the votes. The earlier unrest therefore did not result in a defeat for the incumbent National Movement. Saakashvili still had the majority of the parliament on his side. Georgian foreign policy therefore remained unchanged, and reunification with the two breakaway republics was still top priority.

3.2 Military provocations

The Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 can be subdivided into five phases. The first phase consisted of mutual provocations that occurred in July and the beginning of August. A series of provocations on both sides caused the tensions to rise further. Firstly, Georgia accused Russia of an attack against the Georgian military in April 2008. The incident with a Georgian unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicle (AUV), shot down over Abkhazia’s Gali district, led Saakashvili to immediately accuse Russia. However, Russia denied having anything to do with this incident.

On the other side, Moscow, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali accused Georgia of holding large-scale military exercises and concentrating military personnel and equipment near the administrative

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140 Nazrin Mehdiyeva, ‘New Man in the Kremlin: What Future for Russian Foreign Policy?’ The International Spectator 2008 Vol. 43 No. 2 pp. 24
141 Ibid; 24
142 Ibid; 27
143 Jeffrey Mankoff, ‘Russian Foreign Policy and the United States After Putin’ Problems of Post-Communism 2008 vol. 55 no. 4 pp. 42
144 Mikhail Vignansky, ‘If They Fly Here Again, We Will Respond The Same Way. Amid Domestic Political Crisis, Georgia accuses Russia of Agression’ Vremya Novostei 22-04-2008 in Niedermaier (eds.) 2008; 345
border with Abkhazia. This was considered as proof that Georgia was preparing to unleash a war. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that “Moscow was prepared to use military force if Georgia started an armed conflict with Abkhazia and South Ossetia”.145

On May 5, two more AUV’s were shot down over Abkhazia. The Russian military now officially notified Georgia that “it would no longer allow Georgian military aircrafts to fly over the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict-zone”.146 The Russian military also made it clear that “Abkhazia was falling under Russian protection” and that it would be “defended, not only by CIS, but by the Russian Defence Ministry if necessary”.147

Russia then provoked Georgia by sending unarmed railroad troops into Abkhazia to restore railroads and infrastructure. The Georgian Deputy Defence Minister Batu Kutelia reacted by stating,

“We assess Russian actions as another aggressive move challenging Georgia’s territorial sovereignty. There is no doubt that the Russian side is strengthening its military infrastructure in order to begin a military invasion”.148

Tensions escalated in South Ossetia on July 3, 2008, when an Ossetian village police chief was killed by a bomb and Dmitriy Sanakoyev, head of the pro-Georgian pseudo-government, was nearly killed by a roadside mine.149 That night, both the Georgians and South Ossetians attacked each other’s villages and checkpoints, resulting in more than ten persons killed or wounded.150 Although fire ceased the next day, Russia intervened by sending fighter planes to fly over South Ossetia, thereby violating Georgian airspace. Russian leadership said the purpose was “to cool down the hotheads in Tbilisi”.151

145 Pavel Belov, ‘Russia is Prepared to Protect Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Force of Arms’ Kommersant 26-04-2008 in Niedermaier (eds.) 2008; 351
146 Aleksandr Gabuyev and Georgy Dvali, ‘Abkhazia’s Claims make Hotspot even Hotter. The Republic’s Defence Minister Threatens to March on Kutaisi’ Kommersant 05-05-2008 in Niedermaier (eds.) 2008; 357
147 Vladimir Solovyov and Georgy Dvali, ‘Georgia believes Russia wants Military Action. Tbilisi is Asking the West to Avert a War’ Kommersant 07-05-2008 in Niedermaier (eds.) 2008; 360
148 Aleksandr Gabuyev and Georgy Dvali, ‘Railroad of Disconnection. Georgia is Upset over Arrival of Russian Railroad Troops in Abkhazia’ Kommersant 02-06-2008 in Niedermaier (eds.) 2008; 368
149 Jim Nichol, ‘Russia-Georgia conflict in 2008: Context and Implications for US Interests’ CSR Report for Congress, 03-03-2009 p.4
150 Ibid; 4
On July 15, both Georgia and Russia started conducting military exercises. Russia launched a large-scale military exercise near the Georgian border, called “Kavkaz-2008”. Here some 8,000 Russian troops participated in a military training, among them paratroopers and the Black Sea Fleet. The Russian authorities argued it was a pre-planned counter-terrorism operation, but aimed also to prepare the troops for involvement in special peacekeeping operations, in relation to the latest tensions in the region. When the exercise ended on August 2, the troops remained in their positions near the Georgian border. After the conflict Georgia used the Russian military exercises as evidence of Russia’s intentions to attack Georgia, arguing that it was Russia who started the five-day war.

Georgia, however, was itself involved in a two-week war-game exercise “Immediate Response 2008”. Here some 1,000 U.S. troops gathered with 600 Georgian forces and smaller numbers from Ukraine, Armenia, and Azerbaijan at the Vaziani military base, a former Russian air force base near Tbilisi.

### 3.3 The South Ossetia-Georgia conflict
The second phase of the conflict was the insurgencies between South Ossetians and Georgians in the beginning of August. Tensions had now escalated to a level of military violence between the breakaway region and Georgia. To begin with, on August 1, a military truck with six Georgian police officers was reportedly hit by South Ossetian explosives. Georgian military forces retaliated with sniper attacks against South Ossetians, reportedly killing six. Violence continued on August 2. The South Ossetian side reported that six persons were killed and 15 injured in shelling and sniper attacks from the Georgian side. Georgian authorities reported that seven people, including six civilians and one police officer, were injured in mortar attacks against the Georgian-controlled villages Ergneti, Nuli, Zemo Nikozi and Kvemo Nikozi.

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152 Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 11
153 Ibid; 11
154 Tuathail, 2008; 684
155 Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 12
156 Tuathail, 2008; 685
157 Ibid; 12
158 Ibid; 12
Already the events could be considered one of the most serious clashes in the conflict zone over many years, and both sides blamed each other.\textsuperscript{159} Georgia believed that the Russian peacekeepers were involved, which Russia in turn termed a “dirty provocation.”\textsuperscript{160} The South Ossetian President Kokoity now announced mobilization and threatened to strike Georgian cities.

On the third day of August, evacuations of South Ossetian women and children started towards the North Ossetian region in Russia. The fighting continued between South Ossetian and Georgian villages, using small arms, grenade launchers, mortars and armoured personnel carriers.\textsuperscript{161} Georgian troops supposedly fired on the South Ossetian villages, as well as on Russian peacekeepers.\textsuperscript{162}

In the night of August 6-7 the Russian peacekeeping forces identified eight aircrafts heading from Georgia to South Ossetia.\textsuperscript{163} On the 7\textsuperscript{th}, the South Ossetian de facto authorities reported that 18 persons had been injured in overnight shelling attacks against the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali and the enclave-controlled villages of Khetagurovo, Dmenisi, Sarabuki and Ubait.\textsuperscript{164} On the same day, talks to come to a peaceful solution were planned between Georgia and South Ossetia, with Russian presence. However, due to the overnight attacks, both Russia and South Ossetia decided not to attend to this meeting. Shelling resumed in the afternoon between the breakaway region and Georgia.

In the early evening, Saakashvili announced a unilateral cease-fire in a televised address.

"The Russian peacekeeping forces told us that they have lost control over the separatist forces. There are many casualties, including dead and many people are wounded. No one should try to portray us as an aggressor. We have been appealing to our partners to help us to build direct dialogue, to help us internationalise the peace process. Please, do not test the Georgian state's patience. Let's stop this spiral of violence."\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{159}] Timothy L. Thomas, ‘The Bear Went Through the Mountain: Russia Appraises its Five-Day War in South Ossetia’ The Journal of Slavic Military Studies 2009 No.22 p.10
\item[\textsuperscript{160}] Ibid; 10
\item[\textsuperscript{161}] Anna A. Petrova, ‘The Russian-Georgian Conflict. Chronicle of Military Events, August 2008’ Russian Analytical Digest No.45 Issue 8 p. 15
\item[\textsuperscript{162}] Ibid; 15
\item[\textsuperscript{163}] Ibid; 15
\item[\textsuperscript{164}] Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 13
\item[\textsuperscript{165}] Roman Olearchyk and Charles Clover, ‘Georgia Calls for Truce in South Ossetia’ Financial Times 08-08-2008
\end{itemize}
However, only hours later, Georgia’s Defence Ministry said South Ossetian militias had nevertheless continued to heavily shell Georgian villages and positions. Additionally, Saakashvili said to have received information that Russian troops and a convoy of over 100 Russian military vehicles was passing through the Roki tunnel, connecting North to South Ossetia. Russian authorities, however, reported that “the movements at the Roki tunnel were part of normal rotation of Russian peacekeeping troops stationed in South Ossetia” and that it had “moved troops or artillery through the tunnel only after the Georgians opened fire”. At 11 p.m. the Georgian peacekeeping general in the area, Mamuka Kurashvili, declared on the Georgian news that the Georgian government had decided to “restore constitutional order” in the separatist enclave, in response to the South Ossetian bombardment.

3.4 The Five-day war

The third phase of the conflict between Georgia and Russia was the involvement of Russia (and Abkhazia) in the insurgen cies between South Ossetia and Georgia. This involvement meant the start of the five-day war that commenced in the night of August 7/8 (figure 3.1). Georgia had attempted to ‘restore constitutional order’ in South Ossetia after the insurgeries that took place. By 1:00 a.m. Georgian troops launched a large-scale military offensive on Tskhinvali. Georgian troops were thus moved into the territory of South Ossetia against the 1992 Sochi agreement. However, at approximately 1:30 a.m., tanks of the Russian 58th Army also started crossing into South Ossetia. Georgia argued it reacted in prevention of Russian armoured forces allegedly seeking the “invasion of Georgia”. Russian authorities contended this accusation and used the Georgian attacks to legitimize an attack on Georgian troops, arguing it merely had to defend the Russian citizens together with the Russian peacekeeping troops.

3.4.1 August 8

From midnight onwards, Georgia shelled Tskhinvali. During the night, it eventually took control of most of the city and several ethnic Ossetian villages. Whether or not Russian troops

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166 ICG report, ‘Russia v.s. Georgia, the Fallout’ Europe Report No.195 22-08-2008 p.1
167 Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 14
168 Tuathail, 2008; 685
169 Ibid; 685
170 ICG report, ‘Russia v.s. Georgia, the Fallout’ Europe Report No.195 22-08-2008 p.1
were in the Roki tunnel before the Georgian attacks, its response on the bombings was almost immediate. By morning, Russian tanks were attacking Georgians in and around Tskhinvali, already forcing them out of the city again.172

Georgian troops attempted to push back into the city, but were forced to holdback by the intense artillery and air attacks from the Russian side. By now, Russia had also commenced the attacks on targets within the territory of Georgia proper, among them the Georgian military base in Gori. The Georgian government in effect declared a general mobilization and appealed for international aid. Also, the Abkhaz forces joined the Russians in the fighting, heading for the only part of their territory still under Georgian control, the Kodori valley. Additionally, Abkhazia sent 1,000 volunteers to South Ossetia.173

Meanwhile, thousands of South Ossetians fled to North Ossetia creating a large group of internally displaced persons (IDP’s). South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity claimed that an estimated 1400 South Ossetian civilians had been killed.174 This number was confirmed by the Russian authorities.

In the evening of August 8, a majority of the Georgian forces were forced into a retreat toward Gori, although some troops remained in the outskirts of Tskhinvali.175 The United States and other Western nations, joined by NATO, condemned the violence and demanded a cease-fire.176 Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice went even further, calling on Russia to withdraw its forces.177

The attack in the Gori region had launched the fourth phase of the conflict. The conflict was now extended from South Ossetian territory to Georgia proper. Now, Russia not only operated in South Ossetia as a peacekeeper, but also actively attacked Georgian territory (considered that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not Georgian territory). The Russians argued that this was part of the peacekeeping operation. However, it also struck civilian and economic targets.

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172 Roy Allison, ‘Russia Resurgent? Moscow’s Campaign to Coerce Georgia to Peace’ International Affairs 2008 No.84 issue 6 p.1148
173 Petrova, 2008; 15
174 Human Right Watch, ‘Up In Flames; Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia’ January 2009 p. 74
175 Tuathail, 2008; 685
177 Ibid; 1
and assisted the Abkhaz troops in the Kodori Gorge, making the claim of peacekeeping difficult to maintain.

3.4.2 August 9

The battle of Tskhinvali had thus reached its climax, and Russia expanded its military campaign to Georgia proper. From August 9, Russia increased the bombings on Georgian targets. During the night, the Russian air force carried out attacks against the Black Sea port of Poti. During the day, attacks were also carried out against the Georgian military base and the railway station Senaki (western Georgia), causing several casualties. Russian aircraft also started to bomb Gori city, and again attacked the Gori military base and the Vaziani base.

Next to the military targets, Russian jets were hitting civilian targets and economic installations. Western journalists saw apartment buildings in ruins, some still on fire. Reports came in of “scores of dead bodies and blood covered civilians, among them elderly people, women and children”. One of the important economic targets were Georgia’s pipelines, functioning as the energy transit from the Caspian Sea to Western Europe. Here bombs fell close to the BTC pipeline in the Gardabani district, 20 km southeast of Tbilisi.

Russia also increased its number of troops and tanks into South Ossetia while shelling continued in Tskhinvali. The Russian Black Sea Fleet advanced towards the port of Poti and towards Abkhazia. The Abkhaz were assisted in their battle in the Kodori valley. Supported by Russian planes, they bombed the Kodori region for three consecutive days, forcing the flight of approximately 3,000 ethnic Georgians.

Rhetoric on either side escalated. Both sides made statements on the ambitions to make peace and declare cease-fire, but neither was showing signs of backing down. Putin talked of

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178 Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 16
180 Peter Finn, ‘Russia-Georgia War Intensifies; Civilian Deaths on Increase In Conflict Over S. Ossetia’ The Washington Post 10-08-2008 p. A01
181 Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 16
182 Peter Finn, ‘Russia-Georgia War Intensifies; Civilian Deaths on Increase In Conflict Over S. Ossetia’ The Washington Post 10-08-2008 p. A01
183 ICG report, ‘Russia v.s. Georgia, the Fallout’ Europe Report No.195 22-08-2008 p.3
"genocide" against the South Ossetians, while Saakashvili spoke to a small group of foreign reporters, saying

_The Russians "want to get rid of us. They want to make regime change, and they want to get rid of any democratic movement in this part of their neighbourhood. That's it, period."_\(^{184}\)

The Russian response, targeting economic and civilian structures far from the zone of hostilities, caused widespread international charges of ‘disproportionality’.\(^{185}\) Neither the role of peace-keeper, nor the argument of self defence could explain these events. Not only the Georgian military was attacked, but also its economy and society were weakened and distorted.

### 3.4.3 August 10

From August 10, Russia also extended their ground troops to occupy Georgian villages within South Ossetia.\(^{186}\) The Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs declared that Georgia had begun pulling its troops out of South Ossetia and the Russian peacekeeping force now gained full control over Tskhinvali.

The Russian fleet patrolled the Georgian Black Sea coast, and sank some Georgian missile boats that had engaged it.\(^{187}\) Russian units in addition, blew up a vital railway bridge linking Tbilisi and the west of the country, causing Georgia to be cut in two and therefore further disrupting its economy.\(^{188}\) The Russian ground forces meanwhile advanced from South Ossetia towards Gori. Georgia, at the end of the day, passed a formal request for ceasefire to the Russian Embassy in Tbilisi. This however failed to halt Russia’s increasingly intensive military response.

### 3.4.4 August 11

Overnight, the Russian air force destroyed two important civilian radar stations in Shavshvebi, west of Tbilisi, and Makhata, 5 km from the capital.\(^{189}\) Attacks were also carried out in the Batumi area on the Black Sea coast, and against an airfield by the Azerbaijani

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\(^{184}\) Ibid; A01  
\(^{185}\) Tuathail, 2008; 688  
\(^{186}\) Tuathail, 2008; 688  
\(^{187}\) Ibid; 688  
\(^{188}\) Ibid; 688  
\(^{189}\) ICG report, ‘Russia v.s. Georgia, the Fallout’ Europe Report No.195 22-08-2008 p.3  
\(^{189}\) Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 18
border.\textsuperscript{190} Russia had thus not answered the Georgian calls for a ceasefire and continued its military actions.

In the early morning, the outskirts of Gori were bombed again, destroying civilian apartment buildings.\textsuperscript{191} Furthermore, Russia confirmed that ground troops, coming from Abkhazia, had seized a Georgian military base in Senaki.\textsuperscript{192} Consequently, Russia entered Abkhazia and Georgia proper with ground troops for the first time. Georgia meanwhile renewed the bombardment of South Ossetia and thereby aborted its ceasefire ambitions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Ossetia reported that Georgian military forces blew up an irrigation canal in Tskhinvali.\textsuperscript{193}

The Georgian authorities claimed that Russian ground troops had now also captured Gori. Although this occurred only two days later, a majority of the civilians did flee the city, leaving it more or less empty. Russian battleships blocked the Black Sea coastline, preventing Georgian cargo ships from reaching the Black Sea ports.\textsuperscript{194} The Georgian economy now came to a near standstill. Saakashvili tried to convince the international community that Russian intentions were to “totally occupy Georgia”.\textsuperscript{195} President Medvedev downplayed this rhetoric, and stated that the Russian military had "completed a significant part of the operations to oblige the Georgian authorities, to restore peace to South Ossetia."\textsuperscript{196}

3.4.5 August 12
On August 12, Medvedev reported to Javier Solana, the European Union’s High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy that the Russian mission to coerce Georgia to peace had been accomplished and that it would now conclude the operation.\textsuperscript{197} In a subsequent meeting with Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov and chief of Armed Forces General Staff Nikolai Makarov, Medvedev stated,

\\textsuperscript{190} Ibid; 18
\textsuperscript{191} Petrova, 2008; 16
\textsuperscript{192} Catherine Belton and Isabel Gorst, ‘Moscow Threatens Georgia Regime, Says Bush’ \textit{Financial Times} 12-08-2008 p.1
\textsuperscript{193} Petrova, 2008; 16
\textsuperscript{194} Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 18
\textsuperscript{195} Catherine Belton and Isabel Gorst, ‘Moscow Threatens Georgia Regime, Says Bush’ \textit{Financial Times} 12-08-2008 p.1
\textsuperscript{196} Michael Schwirtz, Anne Barnard and Andrew Kramer, ‘Russian Forces Capture Military Base in Georgia’ \textit{The New York Times} 12-08-2008 p.13
\textsuperscript{197} Jim Nichol, ‘Russia-Georgia conflict in 2008: Context and Implications for US Interests’ \textit{CSR Report for Congress, 03-03-2009} p.7
“Based on your report I have ordered an end to the operations to oblige Georgia to restore peace.... The security of our peacekeeping brigade and civilian population has been restored. The aggressor has been punished and suffered very heavy losses.”

However, this did not mean that Russia aborted its complete military operation. Russian jets still attacked targets close to Tbilisi, including the Vaziani base, and villages in several districts. An area close to the BTC pipeline in the region Kvemo Kartli was bombed. Also Gori was targeted again with new bombings causing additional civilian casualties. The Abkhaz forces captured the Kodori Valley area and forced the Georgian troops out of the region.

Then in the afternoon, president Medvedev met the French President Nicolas Sarkozy. The mediation of the president in office of the EU, Sarkozy, led to a six-point ceasefire document. The six principles were: “no use of force”; “cessation of hostilities”; “free access to humanitarian aid”; “Georgian armed forces to withdraw to their normal bases”; “Russian military forces to withdraw to the lines prior to the start of hostilities”, although they would implement additional security measures pending an international mechanism; and “international discussions on achieving lasting security in Abkhazia and South Ossetia”. The document was agreed to first by Russia and then by Georgia.

The six-point ceasefire agreement was the official end of the war between Russia and Georgia and between the separatist enclaves and Georgia. This however did not lead to a complete pullback of the Russian troops. In fact, Russia was still advancing its troops on Georgian territory moving them towards Gori under the agreement of ‘additional security measures’. The continued occupancy of Georgian territory and later violations of the six-point agreement are part of the ongoing fifth phase in the conflict between Russia and Georgia.

3.5 The aftermath
The day after the six-point deal, Saakashvili requested the document to be modified by removing the final clause, referring to talks on the future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This was agreed to by Medvedev and the signing of the documents was completed

198 Ibid; 7
199 Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 18
200 Ibid; 18
201 Nicoll, 2008; 2
in the following days (first South Ossetia and Abkhazia, then Georgia and finally Russia on August 16). However, the six-point deal was not completely adhered to on the Russian end. As already mentioned above, after the agreement of August 12 and the official signing on August 16, Russian troops were still carrying out missions on Georgian territory.

On August 13, the troops occupied Gori and its military base with the argument of creating a buffer zone. Although Georgia agreed to these measures only in the proximity of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia went on to further occupy Georgia. It argued that this was permitted under the deal of ‘additional security measures’.202

On August 14, an armoured column even advanced from Gori, along the main highway to within 40 km of Tbilisi, while US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was meeting Saakashvili in this same capital.203 Russian troops further attacked civilian homes in Gori and they continued to destroy military infrastructure in Senaki, Zugdidi and Poti.204

Both German Chancellor Angela Merkel, visiting Medvedev in Sochi, and Condoleezza Rice emphasized Georgia’s territorial integrity and urged Russia to withdraw its troops from Georgia proper. Also NATO condemned Russia’s actions in Georgia and called Russia’s use of force “inappropriate”.205 The NATO-Russia Council activities were suspended temporarily.

On August 17, President Medvedev promised President Sarkozy a withdrawal of Russian troops in Georgia to commence a day later.206 However, there were no signs of this happening. On the contrary, Russian troops re-entered the port of Poti and captured 20 Georgian soldiers.207

From August 20, Russia began to withdraw its troops from Georgia and by August 22, most Russian forces were already withdrawn from Georgia. Yet, there remained forces in the area just across the South Ossetian border, in Poti and around the towns of Zugdidi and Senaki.208

202 Nicoll, 2008; 2
203 Ibid; 2
204 Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 18
205 Schröder, 2008; 55
206 Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 19
207 Nicoll, 2008; 2
208 Ibid; 2
Russia rejected a French initiated UN resolution that called for a complete withdrawal of forces to lines held before August 7, and in contrast formulated its own draft resolution where it intended to maintain troops and checkpoints in Georgia proper, which included Senaki, containing a Georgian military base and an airfield, the Poti port, and a portion of the Georgian east-west highway.  

Only on October 8, 2008, the Russian withdrawal was completed as drawn by the French resolution. They had finally removed the last of the checkpoints that they had established in the extended buffer zones. However, Russia assigned the old de jure boundaries of the Soviet Autonomous Oblast, not the de facto boundaries of post-Soviet South Ossetia as the new borderline for South Ossetia, thereby still violating the six-point agreement.  

On August 26, 2008, Russia again surprised the international community. After unanimous approval by both houses of parliament on August 25, President Medvedev announced the official recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

“Taking into account the appeals of South Ossetian and Abkhaz peoples, of the Parliaments and Presidents of both Republics, the opinion of the Russian people and both Chambers of the Federal Assembly, the President of the Russian Federation decided to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and to conclude treaties of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance with them.”

The Russian government made no attempt to legitimize this recognition. It did not introduce a UN resolution, nor did it undertake any international consultations over their status. Apart from Russia, Nicaragua and recently Venezuela, the international community did not recognize the independence of both breakaway regions. Georgia for its part, quickly broke off the diplomatic relations with Russia after the official Russian recognition.

As the US, Britain, France and Germany denounced Russia's unilateral move, President Saakashvili described the Russian declaration as an annexation. He accused Russia of “seeking to provoke renewed fighting that would allow Russian armoured divisions to move

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209 Cornell, Popjanevski and Nilsson, 2008; 21
210 Tuathail, 2008; 689
211 Ibid; 689
212 Medvedev’s Statement on South Ossetia and Abkhazia *The New York Times* 26-08-2008
213 Oksana Antonenko, ‘A War With No Winners’, *Survival*, 2008, vol.50 No.5 p.27
around Tbilisi, and wipe Georgia off the map”. 214 He used this Russian move to improve his ties with the West, "I have appealed to all leaders concerned to speed up Georgia's NATO and EU integration." 215

In relation to the Russian recognition, the Western members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) discussed Russian exclusion from possible WTO membership. Putin reacted by saying that WTO membership was something Moscow really didn’t need. "We don't feel or see any advantages from membership, if they exist at all" in the WTO.216

Following the Russian independence recognition, South Ossetia speculated on Russian inclusion. Already after four days, President Kokoity announced that “the region would soon become part of Russia, so that South and North Ossetians could be reunited in one Russian state”.217 Abkhazia however is not at all planning to be incorporated into Russian territory.

Since October 1st, 2008, a European Union Monitoring Mission has been stationed in the conflict area. However, Russia has not allowed this mission to be stationed on South Ossetian territory. The job of the more than 200 monitors is to “ensure that all sides meet their obligations under the August and September agreements signed by Presidents Sarkozy and Medvedev.”218 Nevertheless, the agreements have still not been adhered to. Up to the writing of this thesis, Russia still has over 4,000 troops in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Moreover, a part of Georgia proper (Georgia excluding South Ossetian and Abkhazian territory) is still in the hands of Russian troops, through the occupation of the Akhalgori district. Ethnic Georgians in this area have been forced to choose between Russian citizenship and emigration. Backed by Russian military, the district is now in the grip of Ossetian separatists.219 Steve Bird, the European Union's Monitoring Mission’s spokesman in Georgia, said that monitors had received reports that Georgian farmers were unable to pass checkpoints to reach their land, which had been taken over by Ossetians.220 Precisely one year after the

214 James Hider, ‘Georgia Begs the West for Help as Russia Recognises Breakaway States’ The Times 27-08-2008 p.27
215 Ibid; 27
216 Charles Clover and Isabel Gorst, ‘Russian MPs Vote to Recognise Breakaway Georgian Areas’ Financial Times 26-08-2008 p.2
217 Tony Halpin, ‘Kremlin Announces that South Ossetia Will Join ‘One United Russian State’’ The Times 30-08-2008
218 EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, retrieved from the official website http://www.eumm.eu/en/intro/
219 Tony Halpin, ‘Moscow's Military Occupation Continues Despite Peace Deal; Georgia’ The Times 11-04-2009 p.45
220 Ibid; 45
end of the five-day war, Putin announced “the Kremlin planned to spend nearly $500 million to build a base in Abkhazia and reinforce its de facto border with Georgia.” 221 Not long before this, on August 2, 2009, tensions had raised again between Russia and Georgia, when Russia accused Georgia of firing mortars and grenades into South Ossetia. Russia stated that it would defend South Ossetia with "all available forces and means". 222

It is clearly visible that Russia is not at all planning to pull out its troops from the region. Recently, it has used the rhetoric of Georgian insurgencies in the area as a legitimation to remain in the region and to expand its military bases in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

3.6 Victims of the war

In the five-day war, speculation and rhetoric were used on all sides in relation to the casualty figures. It appears that there was deliberate misinformation and exaggerated reports during the course of the conflict, as a means of propaganda. 223 The problem of obtaining reliable information was aggravated by the purposeful blocking of access for independent monitors. 224 High casualty figures could thus be used by all parties in legitimating their military actions.

South Ossetian and Russian estimates on the total number of casualties lay between 1,500 and 2,000. On August 8 President of South Ossetia Eduard Kokoity stated that “slightly more than 1,400 people had been killed,” claiming that the figure was based on reports from relatives. 225 On August 9, Russian Ambassador to Georgia Vyacheslav Kovalenko said that “at least 2,000 residents of Tskhinvali had died”, using these figures as evidence of genocide. 226 The Georgian government, for its part, inaccurately and repeatedly stated that a total of 44 civilians had been killed during Georgia’s military assault. 227 These figures were later adjusted on all sides. The Ad Hoc Committee established by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to study the situation in Russia and Georgia stated that

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222 Philip P. Pan, ‘Tensions Flare Up In Russia, Georgia; Moscow Says South Ossetia Was Attacked’ The Washington Post 02-08-2009
223 Amnesty International, ‘ Civilians in the Line of Fire, the Georgia-Russia Conflict’ November 2008 p.10
224 Ibid; 10
225 Human Right Watch, ‘Up In Flames; Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia’ January 2009 p. 74
226 Ibid; 74
227 Ibid; 76
“independent reports put the total number of deaths at between 300 and 400, including the military.” 228

The war also produced a massive amount of internally displaced persons (IDP’s), disrupting especially South Ossetian and Georgian society. According to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) figures, approximately 192,000 people were initially displaced by the conflict, including some 127,000 within Georgia, 30,000 within South Ossetia and 35,000 who fled northwards from South Ossetia into North Ossetia in the Russian Federation.229

3.7 Who is to blame?

Both Russia and Georgia legitimized their own military actions in the start of the war by arguing that they only acted reactively. The Georgian government allegedly received intelligence reports of Russian troops moving towards the Roki tunnel, as part of a “well planned invasion of Georgia”.230 Saakashvili used the information to legitimize a moving of troops further into South Ossetia. A month after the war Saakashvili told the press;

"We wanted to stop the Russian troops before they could reach Georgian villages." "When our tanks moved toward Tskhinvali, the Russians bombed the city. They were the ones -- not us -- who reduced Tskhinvali to rubble."231

Russia argued that it was Georgia who first invaded South Ossetia against the Sochi agreement. It claimed that it had to defend its peacekeepers and citizens in South Ossetia from “treacherous Georgian military aggression.”232 In an official statement on August 8, 2008 Medvedev said

“Tonight in South Ossetia, Georgian forces basically performed an act of aggression against Russian peacekeepers and civilians....In accordance with the constitution and our federal laws, as the president of the Russian Federation, I am obliged to protect the life and dignity of Russian

228 Luc Van den Brande, PACE, Chairman Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau of the Assembly ‘The Situation on the Ground in Russia and Georgia in the Context of the War Between those Countries’ Doc. 11720 Addendum II , 29- 09-2008 http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc08/edoc11720add2.htm
229 UNHCR, ‘Revised Figures Push Number of Georgia Displaced up to 192,000’ 12-09-2008 p.48 http://www.unhcr.org/georgia.html?page=news&id=48ca8d804
230 Tuathail, 2008; 685
231 Spiegel Staff, ‘Did Saakashvili Lie? The West Begins to Doubt The Georgian Leader’ Spiegel Online 15-09-2008 http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,578273,00.html
232 Dumitru Minzarari, ‘Georgia/Russia: The War of Words’ Transitions Online 19-08-2008
citizens wherever they are. The logic of the steps taken by us right now is dictated by these circumstances. We will not allow an unpunishable loss of lives of our citizens.”

The Russian movement of troops is still subject of immense debate. It still is not clear whether the Russians moved any troops to the tunnel before the bombing of Tskhinvali. Russian authorities claimed it only moved troops through the Roki tunnel as a standard rotation of the peacekeeping forces. Russia claimed to have moved more troops through the tunnel, only after the shelling of Tskhinvali. This movement through the Roki tunnel is an important factor in the debate of who is blameworthy of the war.

The international debate on the subject is still very much alive. Although during the war, most media were blaming Russia for the initiation of the war, as did most Western states, after the war this opinion shifted. A former OSCE senior monitor, Ryan Grist, present in the region on the night of the war, told the New York Times it was Georgia that launched the first military strikes against Tskhinvali. Der Spiegel, a German weekly newspaper, already exposed some information on the upcoming EU Commission report on the conflict. As it seems, the document also assigned much of the blame to the Georgian President. In the Spiegel article EU Commission members Christopher Langton and Bruno Coppieters both clearly lay the blame on the Georgian side. Der Spiegel most recently stated that the independent commission has indeed concluded that Tbilisi is responsible for causing the five-day conflict. However, due to the complexity and diplomatic sensitivity of this commission report, the official outcomes are published at the end of September 2009.

The US in particular has supported Georgia during the war. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that the US “calls on Russia to cease attacks on Georgia by aircraft and missiles, respect Georgia's territorial integrity, and withdraw its ground combat forces from Georgian soil”.

234 John Swain, ‘Georgia Fires First Shot, Say UK Monitor’ Times Online 9-11-2008
235 Uwe Klussman, ‘A Shattered Dream in Georgia; EU Probe Creates Burden For Saakashvili’ Spiegel Online 15-06-2009 http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,630543,00.html
236 Ibid
237 Spiegel Staff, ‘Independent Experts Blame Georgia for South Ossetia War’ Spiegel Online 21-09-2009 http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,650228,00.html
238 Holly Watt, ‘Bush Praises Georgia and Condemns Russia; Before Veterans of Foreign Wars, President Keeps Up His Call for Withdrawal’ The Washington Post 21-08-2008
This reaction clearly shows that the US is on the Georgian side. However, it is not clear whether or not the US actually believed it was Russia who struck first. In the end it was Russian disproportionate response that caused most countries to condemn Russia more than Georgia. Although it is important to prove who struck first, it is already clear that Russia, in either way, has used the situation to its own advantage by attacking Georgia proper with such military force.

3.8 Conclusion

The conflict that occurred in August 2008 can be categorized into five phases. The first phase was that of mutual provocations that occurred in July and beginning of August. The military exercises of both countries showed that both were not afraid to demonstrate their military strength.

The second phase of the conflict were the insurgencies between South Ossetians and Georgians in the beginning of August. Georgian police officers had been hit by South Ossetian explosives and this in turn led to a Georgian military retaliation with sniper attacks against South Ossetian separatists.

These events were followed by the third phase of the conflict in which Russia now became involved. Georgia had launched a large-scale military offensive on Tskhinvali, supported by artillery. It used alleged Russian military movement through the Roki tunnel, as a means of legitimizing the full blown attack on South Ossetia. Russian authorities, in turn, contended this accusation and argued that Russia moved troops to South Ossetia only in retaliation of the Georgian attacks on Tskhinvali. The Russian involvement meant the start of the five-day war.

The fourth phase was the extension of the conflict from South Ossetian territory to Georgia proper. Now, Russia not only operated in South Ossetia as a peacekeeper, but also actively attacked Georgian territory (considered that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not Georgian territory). The Russians argued that this was part of the peacekeeping operation, however with the bombing of civilian and economic targets, it made this claim hard to defend.

The fifth phase is that of continued occupancy of Georgian territory. Contrary to the six-point agreement, Russia remains on Georgian territory. This violation of Georgian territorial integrity created widespread international criticism towards Russia. In addition, the official
recognition of both regions created even more opposition. It has maintained military presence in the region up to today, further planning the expansion of its military bases in these the two separatist regions.

Two contrary claims have been made in the causes of the five-day war. Georgia argues that Russia is the chief initiator of the conflict of August 2008. The bombings of Tskhinvali were a mere action of self defence, since Russian troops were signalled in the Roki tunnel on August 7. However, Russia argues it started its military offensive as a result of Georgian belligerent attacks. It acted essentially retaliatory.\(^{239}\) In the next chapter the Russian interests in its own specific military campaign will be researched. Since it is difficult to point to one party who is blameworthy, due to the complexity of this conflict, the goal is specifically not to come to such a conclusion. Russian interests can however explain, to some extent the specific outcome of the conflict.

\(^{239}\) Allison 2008; 1150
Chapter 4: Russian interests in the war against Georgia

4.1 Introduction

In this last chapter on the five-day war, we will look particularly at the Russian interests and the specific actions during the five-day war. Russia’s rapid counterattack cannot be signed off only as a peacekeeping mission or self defence operation. It had, since 2006, challenged Georgia by boycotting its major export products as well as increasing the energy prices. In the last months before the war it had also challenged Georgia by its military provocations. Most important, already for a longer period, it challenged Georgia’s territorial integrity by increasing its relations with the breakaway regions. In doing so, Russia more or less recognized the two regions as independent entities, capable of maintaining its own relations with foreign states. In addition, it specifically stated its intentions of formal recognition after the international Kosovo recognition. The question that arises is why Russia was so concerned with these two breakaway regions to the level of going to war over them?

The answer lies not in the two breakaway regions, but in the country that bears the official sovereignty, the republic of Georgia. Russia and Georgia had growingly formulated conflicting foreign policies. Since Putin, Russia had emphasized its ambitions to return to its former great power status. In extension, it emphasized the importance to maintain a sphere of influence in its ‘near abroad’ for security purposes. Georgia however, dominantly since the Rose Revolution, formulated its ambition to focus more on Western Europe and the US. Mainly this focus went to the membership of the two major Western institutions, NATO and the EU. This Georgian foreign policy was not compatible with Russian ambitions and has therefore been countered by Russia. One of the major Russian strategies to keep Georgia in its sphere of influence has been the effort of political and economic destabilization. Among other things, Russia has used Abkhazia and South Ossetia to reach this goal. The war, to a great deal, assisted Russia in this destabilizing effort. The military, the economy and society in general have been hit extensively by the Russian military operation. Also politically it has been damaged by the outcome of the war. Georgia lost not only the war it started; it also lost one of the main agenda points; the reunification of the two regions into Georgia proper. These economic and political losses did indeed have its negative effects on the popularity of Saakashvili’s government. In April and May demonstrations were held by the opposition, backed by tens of thousands of unsatisfied demonstrators, demanding his resignation.
This chapter will research the specific Russian interests and goals in the five-day war and the subsequent recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It will then look at the ways in which Russia achieved these goals. Finally, the consequences of these actions for Georgia will be outlined. Did the Russian actions lead to the results looked for?

4.2 Russian interests in destabilization

As already stated in my hypotheses, Russia had specific interests in the destabilization of Georgia. This destabilization should alter the threats currently coming from Georgia’s focus towards the West. These specific threats will be described hereafter and the effect of Georgian destabilization on these threats will be explained.

4.2.1 Western democracy spread

The first Russian interest was to halt the Western democracy spread to its sphere of influence and ultimately to its own country. The Rose Revolution described in chapter one had changed the Georgian model from a semi-authoritarian regime to a Western democracy. The Rose Revolution had been part of a small wave of democracy revolutions that ensued between 2000 and 2005 and were branded the ‘colour revolutions’. A democratic revolution started in Serbia (2000), after which Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) changed their regimes from semi-authoritarianism to democracies, through non-violent revolutions. Kyrgyzstan also experienced a regime change considered as a ‘colour revolution’, only in this case it was not without violence and it did not change towards a more democratic rule. Putin and his strategists could have seen the ousting of the Georgian president as an abnormality, however the events in Serbia and Ukraine, seemed to show a clear pattern of behaviour that could occur in Russia as well. The ‘colour revolution’ thus evoked anxiety within the Russian elite about the possibility of a similar effort of regime change in Russia, in the form of a ‘soft takeover’ in which opposition is supported by foreign sponsors. In the Russian perception the West had sponsored these revolutions with the assistance of Western NGO’s, specifically aiming at the spread of influence and leverage further towards the East.

241 Lapidus, 2007; 140
Georgia was being presented as an example of a serious dedication to democratization and market reforms.\textsuperscript{242} Russia on the other hand, was portrayed by the West as increasingly undemocratic and corrupt. Freedom House, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) which focuses on the research and advocacy of democracy, political freedom and human rights, had already for some years graded Georgia’s political rights and civil liberties above those of Russia.\textsuperscript{243} Also the ‘Corruption Perception Index’ (an index created by the NGO Transparency International, which compiles different analyses into an index of all countries, on corruption) showed that Georgia was far less corrupt than Russia, indexing it at 79 out of 180, while Russia was placed on 143 in 2008.\textsuperscript{244} Moscow had been highly discontented with this Western criticism. The State Duma considered this as “the pretext for intervention in the internal affairs in order to change the constitutional order and to stimulate pressure from outside as well as inside.”\textsuperscript{245}

The colour revolutions were not only seen as a domestic threat, but also a threat towards Russian foreign policy interests. Russia perceived the ‘colour revolutions’ and the subsequent improved relations with the EU as a new Western effort to “reshape the post Soviet space” and as a threat to Russia’s ambitions to control the region.\textsuperscript{246}

After the Rose Revolution, the EU started to show an increased interest in Georgia. A European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was signed with Georgia in May 2004. The objective of the ENP was to “share the benefits of the EU 2004 enlargement with neighbouring countries in strengthening stability, security and well-being through greater political, security, economic and cultural co operation”.\textsuperscript{247} Although some of EU’s initial enthusiasm was lost from 2005 onwards, mostly due to growing French and German opposition, the EU remained offering financial and technical assistance to Georgia as long as conditions of political, economic and institutional reforms were being met.\textsuperscript{248} These conditions were further set up in the Action Plan signed in 2006. The conditionality of this assistance created EU leverage over Georgia in all sorts of policy areas, among which:

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid;152
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid
\textsuperscript{245} Shlapentokh, 2007
\textsuperscript{246} Tsygankov, 2006;152
Promotion of peaceful resolution of internal conflicts;
Cooperation in the field of justice, freedom and security;
Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy, including European Security and Defence Policy;
Strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions, and human rights;
Encouraging economic development;
Cooperation in transport and energy, contributing to energy security and supply diversification needs for the EU.  

Russia worried about the potential of the ENP to act as a ‘revisionist force’. The EU had positioned itself to execute more control over Georgia’s road to Western democracy, its security and defence policy and energy and transport. These improved EU relations with the CIS member states came into direct conflict with the Russian emphasis on the ‘near abroad’ and the balance of power. The permanent representative of Russia in the European Union, Vladimir Chizhov, delivered a diplomatic but barely coded warning to Brussels in 2005, against ‘counter-productive’ interference in the CIS countries:

“Our position is that the post-Soviet space should not become an arena of rivalry for forces pursuing their various interests, as it is a matter of guaranteeing Russia’s national security and defending its political and economic interests, and ultimately European security”.

Like the EU, NATO also uses conditionality to shape possible future members to the mould of Western norms and values. Aspirant countries are expected to reform in the political and economic fields. These include “settling any international, ethnic or external territorial disputes by peaceful means”; “demonstrating a commitment to the rule of law and human rights”; “establishing democratic control of their armed forces”; and “promoting stability and well-being through economic liberty, social justice and environmental responsibility”. Here again Russian leaders regarded this spread of Western norm and values towards their borders

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249 European Neighborhood Policy, ‘EU/Georgia Action Plan’ 2006
251 Rumer, 2007; 30
252 Derek Averre, ‘Russia and the European Union: Convergence or Divergence?’ European Security 2005 Vol. 14, No. 2 p. 179
254 Ibid; 66
as a threat to their security, stability, sovereignty and status. A. Kelin, Deputy Director of the Department of General European Cooperation of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, argued that Russia’s fundamental objection to NATO expansion was that these countries would be “increasingly dependent, both militarily and politically on NATO’s decision-making mechanism and that this dependence will be in force on a much broader range of issues then defence against outside aggression”. NATO expansion would therefore threaten further enlargement of the sphere of ‘Eurasian democracy’ which Russian leaders regarded as an essential threat to their security, stability, sovereignty and status.

Georgia, with its Rose Revolution and focus on Western institutions, was perceived as a “heretical model” by Russian elites, posing the danger of further spreading within the ‘near abroad’. It affected Russia’s political superiority within the region. In order to halt this process, Russia started its own neighbourhood policy to (re)create its ‘sphere of influence’. It used a wide range of hard and soft power instruments to promote its goals in the ‘near abroad’. It directly competed with EU instruments. EU free trade was countered with the offer of Russian cheap gas; EU’s offer of visa-facilitation for a small part of the population was answered with Russian visa-free travel and where the EU sent electoral monitors, Russia sent political spin-doctors and financed political parties. In the case of Georgia however, the economic leverage had diminished due to the high levels of US and EU economic assistance, together with the Western pipeline policy, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Georgia was furthermore barely involved in the regional institutions which Russia had set up to keep controlling the region. Georgia was not at all interested in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and had only joined after it was forced in order to get Russian assistance in the combat against military uprising by forces loyal to Gamsakhurdia. Furthermore, Georgia was refusing to become a member of other regional institutions, notably the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Community.

255 Stephen J. Blank, ‘The NATO-Russia Partnership; A Marriage of Convenience or a Troubled Relationship’ Strategic Studies Institute November 2006 p. 32
256 Ibid; 32
257 Ibid; 32
258 Lapidus 152
259 Popescu and Wilson 2009; 8
260 Ibid; 8
261 Averre 2007; 174
(EurAsEC), backed up by broader regional cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Since soft power instruments were limited and had no effects, Russia thus used a more oppressive strategy towards Georgia. Economic boycotts, high energy prices and support for the two breakaway regions had to make sure that Georgia would lose its stability and its attractiveness with institutions like the EU and NATO. The instruments used in the five-day war can also be seen in this light. Russia destroyed many of Georgian civilian targets in order to create more instability. The 192,000 IDP’s and the economic losses together with the political losses created a disgruntled population. This became apparent with the demonstrations that occurred in April and May 2009, where the opposition demanded the ousting of Saakashvili and his government. Post-war 2008 survey data showed that a little more than one-third of the population trusted the authorities, and only a very small percentage expressed any trust toward the opposition.262 This political tumult was of course affecting the attractiveness of Georgia, and these conditions were decreasing its chances for either EU or NATO membership.

4.2.2 Western security spread

Next to the competition in norms and values, Georgia had also become a centre of security rivalry between Russia and the West. NATO, and other Western institutions like the EU, have successfully expanded to the east for over a decade. For a long time, Russia has not been able to counter these ambitions. However, due to its increased economic independence and its particular foreign and security policies, Russia became a more active competitor. Georgia has become an arena for this particular security competition. In the Western perspective, Georgia has become increasingly attractive, due to its geostrategic position and its ambitions to join Western institutions like NATO and the EU. Russia on the other hand, aspires to its own Eurasian security bloc, emphasizing the importance of its ‘near abroad’ in the foreign and security concepts. Destabilization could obstruct Georgian security cooperation with the West, dominantly the possible future membership into the NATO structures, and is therefore a second Russian interest.

Ever since the break-up of the Warsaw Pact, NATO had been flirting with Eastern enlargement. Although Russian foreign policy towards the West drastically altered in the early Yeltsin years, NATO was still perceived as a threat and the enlargement regarded as invasive. Russia increasingly saw the balancing of power of the West as an important foreign policy aim. Its ‘near abroad’ was in addition gaining importance. This did not keep NATO from increasing its security ties with the Eastern European countries. Partnership for Peace (PfP’s) programmes were set up with almost all Eastern European and former Soviet Union countries, among them Georgia. In the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement, the Alliance reaffirmed that it would remain open to new members under article 10 adding, “No European democratic country…would be excluded from consideration.”

Russia demanded that Eastern enlargement could only be acceptable if: “no nuclear weapons or supporting infrastructure would be stationed on the newly acquired territories”; “Eastern movement of NATO military infrastructure would be minimized”; and ultimately that “NATO members would rule out enlargement embracing any of the former Soviet countries”. However, these demands were expressions of hope more than they were able to actually prevent NATO from performing the above mentioned.

In 1997, the first official round of accession talks with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were instigated by NATO and grudgingly accepted by Russia. At the Paris Summit in May 1997, a Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation was set up. The two sides stated “not to consider each other as adversaries” and expressed the goal of “overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation”. However, Russia was still extremely weary of NATO relations with the east, in particular with the former Soviet republics.

In March 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were the first former Warsaw Pact members to join NATO officially. In the same month, the Kosovo crisis caused relations between Russia and NATO to deteriorate severely. Also the Russian relations with Georgia

263 Ibid; 93
264 Smith, 2006; 68
were damaged following the crisis. Georgia had supported the military actions of NATO. In addition, it had refused to renew its membership to the CIS Security Treaty, together with the other GUUAM members. Finally, Shevardnadze had linked Kosovo to its own breakaway regions, suggesting Kosovo could set a good example for a quick and fair settlement of the conflict.\textsuperscript{266} Georgia had become less dependent on Russia due to the improving of the economy since 1998. Militarily it could count on US aid, which increased its Foreign Military Financing to Georgia from $5.35 million in 1998, to $7.9 million in 1999. Russia thus lost Georgia as a CIS security partner and saw it openly siding with NATO, all at the cost of Russian security.

With the coming of Putin as president in 1999, the importance of Russia’s near abroad was further emphasized in the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept. Also the Western security spread was being addressed. The strengthening of military-political blocs and unions, above all NATO eastward expansion, were perceived as main threats to Russian security; also the possible emergence of foreign military bases and large military contingents in direct proximity of the Russian borders were high on the list of threat perceptions.\textsuperscript{267} Furthermore, the decline of the integration processes within the CIS was seen as problematic.\textsuperscript{268} Georgia became applicable in all three cases.

The point of Western military presence in Russia’s direct proximity soon became a reality. In June 2001, Georgia held a large-scale multinational military training, jointly with NATO and partner countries, called the Cooperative Partner – 2001. Not much later, after September 11, Georgia became an important geostrategic location for the ‘war against terror’ in Afghanistan. Russia gave some support by giving NATO access for humanitarian and logistic flights.\textsuperscript{269} Georgia went a lot further and granted NATO army docking and landing rights, refuelling facilities, and overflight rights. In addition, the US also started a train-and-equip program for the Georgian military. In June 2002, Georgia hosted another military training exercise ‘Cooperative Best Effort 2002’. The exercises, designed to “enhance military

\textsuperscript{266} Oksana Antonenko, ‘Russia, NATO and European Security After Kosovo’ \textit{Survival} 1999 No.41 Issue 4 p.132  
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid; 134  
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid; 134  
\textsuperscript{269} Svante E. Cornell, ‘US engagement in the Caucasus: Changing Gears’, \textit{Helsinki Monitor} 2005 no.2 p. 113
interoperability”, took place at the former Russian military base of Vaziani, which had been handed over to Georgia in 2001.270

The Russians used the Chechen rebels in the Pankisi Gorge to threaten Georgia with military action in September 2002. This was both a warning towards Georgia, as well as to keep US interference in Georgia as superficial as possible, thinking that the US would not want a conflict with Russia over Georgia. In this period, Russia also used another important instrument to further challenge Georgia. It specifically increased its support for the breakaway regions, especially using the new Law on Citizenship that was passed in May 2002, by handing out passports to Abkhaz and South Ossetians.

With the Rose Revolution, ties with NATO and US increased drastically. During the presidential election, EU and NATO membership had been dominant features in the campaign of Saakashvili. Just a month after the Rose Revolution, the government drafted an Individual Partnership Action Plan, approved in October 2004, committing it to military, political and judicial reforms through more NATO assistance.271 Relations between Russia and the newly elected president started with the draft of a Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness, Cooperation and Mutual Security. Russia insisted on a clause prohibiting the stationing of any foreign military forces within Georgia.272 More general, there was a clear disagreement on Georgia’s right of strategic partnership and military cooperation with third countries.273 NATO relations were thus central in these new efforts of restoring the relations between the two countries and led to a failure of the treaty.

Meanwhile in 2004, Russia reluctantly accepted a second wave of NATO Eastern enlargement (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). However, the Russian attitude towards NATO enlargement had changed negatively between 1999 and 2004. According to a professional Russian polling station, the Public Opinion Foundation, the mass attitude towards enlargement had risen from 38% who regarded the NATO as aggressive in 1997, to almost 60% in 2004.274 More importantly, the elite sample

270 NATO IMS exercise announcement, NATO and Partner Nations Conduct Field Training Exercise "Cooperative Best Effort 2002"
272 Nygren, 2008; 123
273 Ibid; 123
274 T.J. Colton, ‘Post Communist Russia, the International Environment and NATO’ in Braun (eds.), 2008; 33
showed that the elite attitude in 2004 was even worse with 68% regarding NATO as aggressive.\textsuperscript{275} Although there was much suspicion and aversion towards the 2004 enlargement round, Russia was in no condition to constrain NATO enlargement, simply because it was still economically too weak. Russia understood its weakness and the basic need to get along with the key players in the international system.\textsuperscript{276}

In March 2005, Georgia signed an agreement with NATO on providing host-nation support and transit of NATO forces and personnel.\textsuperscript{277} This deployment of foreign military forces within Georgia was the second major threat according to the Russian Foreign Policy Concept. In 2006, NATO started the phase of ‘intensified dialogue’ with Georgia. This meant that Georgia would integrate closer into NATO and was viewed as a significant step from partnership to candidacy. The US had now become an openly major supporter of Georgian membership to NATO. Already in July 2005, Bush endorsed Georgia’s bid for NATO membership, and subsequently, in January 2007, the US Congress adopted a bill supporting this endorsement.\textsuperscript{278} Thus, NATO membership had now become a real possibility for Georgia.

Russia, during this period, was growing more economically independent, making it freer to pursue its specific foreign and security policies. The dramatic increase in the price of oil, from $35 a barrel in 2004, to $72 in 2006, eventually peaking to $140 in the summer of 2008, generated huge economic surpluses and as a consequence freed Russia from dependence on Western loans. By spring 2007 Russia had the third highest foreign exchange reserve in the world (after China and Japan).\textsuperscript{279} President Putin himself stressed that the era of Russian economic and political weakness had ended and that Russia was now capable of pursuing its self-interest. This self-interest referred clearly to its great power status ambitions and the building of a Eurasian security bloc. These ambitions became clear in the way Russia handled its relations with Georgia from 2006 onwards. Economic boycotts, energy price increases and its enhanced relations with the two quasi states clearly pointed to a more aggressive policy towards Georgia.

\textsuperscript{275} Ibid; 34  
\textsuperscript{276} S.N. MacFarlane, 2008; 44  
\textsuperscript{277} Ibid; 1  
\textsuperscript{278} Nicoll, 2008; 2  
\textsuperscript{279} Peter Ferdinand, ‘Russia and China: Converging Responses to Globalisation’ \textit{International Affairs} 2007 Vol.83 No.4 p. 663
The Bucharest Summit in April 2008 was the peak of NATO-Georgia relations. The possible Georgian inclusion into MAP was considered by Russia as a major threat and further triggered Russian insurgency against the former Soviet republic. Although NATO decided not to include Georgia into MAP, it did state that Georgia (and Ukraine) could become a member in the future. Putin openly admitted that Russia would do everything in its power to circumvent this.

Hereafter, the relations with Georgia reached its all time low. As we have seen in chapter 2, this finally ended in the five-day war. NATO relations with Georgia were clearly against Russian interests and Russia has not been shy to admit this. Georgia fitted many of the major threats that were described in Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept. As Putin had already pointed out, it would do everything to avoid a Georgian membership. Destabilization of the country could be an extremely effective method to reach this specific goal. As the case with the EU, an instable Georgia could obstruct NATO membership. Although NATO doesn’t have the same rigid conditionality structures as the EU, it does attach great value to a stable democratic regime. This is not merely ideological in nature, but also due to its Article V, which attaches great consequences to NATO membership by considering an attack on one member as an attack on all members.

4.2.3 Energy circumvention

The third dominant Russian interest in Georgian destabilization was to halt the process of energy circumvention. Georgia, together with Azerbaijan, geographically creates the possibility to transport Caspian oil and gas to the Black Sea and beyond without having to use either Iranian or Russian pipelines. This has made it extremely valuable for both the European countries as well as the US, who both want to diversify their energy supply. The issue of transportation routes, especially pipelines, has been a key issue in the geopolitics of the Caspian region.280 The US and several European countries have promoted transportation projects that would carry Caspian energy via East-West energy corridor, bypassing Russian territory, such as the Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan pipeline; whereas Russia has used its power to keep almost all Central Asian energy exports under control.281 The production and transportation of oil and gas had undoubtedly become Russia’s major source of income. Next to this, the

281 Ibid; 3172
energy export increasingly became an important foreign policy tool. During Putin’s presidency energy policy gained significant popularity. The 2000 Security Concept increased the importance of the production and transportation of oil and gas, as both an economic as well as a political instrument. The war and subsequent destabilization of Georgia could undermine the functioning of the Westbound transit routes and could obstruct further investments in the enlargement of the transportation through the corridor.

Already since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Caspian Sea region emerged as one of the twenty-first century’s last unexploited oil supplies. New discoveries showed that both Baku in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan's Tengiz field could produce up to 10% of the total US production. Turkmenistan, in addition was the world's fourth largest producer of natural gas. As Russia lost its sovereignty over the Caspian oil and gas fields, it had to find other ways to keep the indirect authority and access to these major energy reserves. Russia focused on two elements: the ownership and control of the pipelines and the geographical status of the Caspian Sea itself. First, together with Iran, it tried to claim a percentage of the resources by arguing that the Caspian Sea is an inland lake where the contents are the shared property of all bordering nations. Russia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan eventually signed bilateral treaties, however Turkmenistan and Iran were not satisfied with these treaties and did not sign any treaties concerning the division of the Caspian Sea. Second, Moscow pressured Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan into using the Russian oil pipelines to pump Caspian oil to the Black Sea port of Novorossisk, via Chechnya.

Russia was not the sole state seeking to control energy flows from the Caspian Sea. Iran, Turkey, the US and European states all wanted to have influence over the transportation of the Caspian energy. Iran suggested the most logical pipeline route, through its territory towards Western Europe. However, this solution was, among others, not accepted by the US who wanted to constrain Iran’s power as much as possible. The US supported the Turkish suggestion of using Georgia as an energy corridor, circumventing both Iran and Russia. The

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282 Griffith, 1998; 426
284 Ibid; 19
285 Griffith, 1998; 427
286 Ibid; 430
287 Ibid; 429
Azerian government finally decided to advance a dual pipeline policy, using both Russian existing pipelines, as well as to transport oil from Baku to the Georgian port of Supsa.

1993, the US oil company Chevron took over the production of the Tengiz field from the Kazakhs and immediately wanted to increase the production. Russia however was not at all content with this increase due to possible price drops, affecting its own energy income. Russia therefore stalled this production increase by decreasing the transportation capabilities. Much later, in 2001, Russia did build the Caspian Pipeline consortium together with Chevron, to increase the Russian oil transit capabilities. This initial stalling had forced Chevron to look for other possible energy transportation routes. Russian obstruction tactics were had thus been counterproductive.

In addition, Georgia’s first signs of transit capabilities became apparent. In 1996 agreements were made on the building of the Baku-Supsa pipeline, transporting Azerian oil from Baku to the Georgian port of Supsa (figure 2.4). This was the first pipeline using Georgia as an energy transit corridor. In 1999, agreements were made on the building of another oil pipeline using Georgia as a transit, the BTC pipeline. During this period, Russia already showed it wanted to maintain its share and influence over the resources and was willing to take the necessary action to keep it that way.

Putin’s selection as prime minister and appointment as president not much later coincided with the increase of oil prices. This triggered the economic recovery much needed after the 1998 economic crisis. Putin made this economic recovery absolute priority for both its foreign and domestic policy. Putin correctly understood that Russian economic progression was tied to its energy and mineral resources, due to the relative poor performances of other industries. His policy of national champions meant that the energy sector had to be converted from privatized to state loyalists’ institutions. In the energy sector, all major companies were manipulated to advance state interest either by threat, reorganisation, or outright takeover.

The oligarchs had bought the state owned oil and gas companies in the 1990’s during the privatization of the Soviet assets. However, Putin now wanted to turn this policy around and renationalize these strategic companies. As soon as he came to office he fired the chairman of Gazprom, Chernomyrdin, and a year later the CEO Vyakhirev was removed by
voting him out through the use of state owned stock. These were replaced by two Putin loyalists, Dmitri Medvedev and Alexei Miller.

Other major resource companies like Sibneft (oil) and Yukos (oil) were also forced into a dominantly state controlled situation. Berezovski, who owned Sibneft, fled the country after threats of arrest. Sibneft was sold off to Abramovich who in turn agreed to sell his 72% to Gazprom after he got visits from the tax authorities in September 2005. Khodorkovski, the CEO of Yukos, together with the other senior Executives, was arrested on charges of fraud. In 2004, Yukos was declared bankrupt and was dismembered by the renationalization and redistribution to state-controlled companies like Rosneft.

Putin reclaimed the state’s share of oil production from 16% in 2000 to 50% in 2007. The gas production was also redirected to the state and in 2007 Gazprom produced 85% of Russia’s total natural gas production. The state consequently largely controlled the energy production. In control, it increased its production of both oil and gas to recover its damaged economy (oil production increased from 6.7 million barrels per day (mbd) in 2000 to 9.8 mbd in 2008). Oil and gas have become Russia’s dominant source of income, generating more than 60% of Russia’s export revenues (64% in 2007), and accounting for 30% of all foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country. Russia consequently created an enormous dependency on energy production for its economic progression. This one-dimensional economy has caused the World Bank to warn Russia for diversifying its economy.

Not only economically but also politically, Russia has used the energy sector to repair its weaknesses. Due to the growth of energy production, Russia has become the most dominant energy producer in the world, making it a true energy superpower. It accounts for 22% of global output of natural gas and furthermore holds 27% of proven reserves, making it the

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289 Ibid; 103
290 Ibid; 103
291 Ibid; 123
292 Ibid; 123
293 Energy Information Administration, ‘Russia Energy Profile’ retrieved on 07-8-2009 http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Russia/NaturalGas.html
world’s leading natural gas producer.\textsuperscript{297} With 12\% of the global oil supply, producing of 9.8 mbd, it is the second largest oil producer just after Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{298}

Europe in particular is depending much on the energy exports of Russia. In the last ten years Western Europe’s reliance on Russian oil exports has grown from around 12\% of total oil imports in 1997, to around 29\% in 2007.\textsuperscript{299} It also supplies 25\% of the gas used by the EU and accounts for 40\% of the gas that the EU imports.\textsuperscript{300}

However, the former Soviet republics on the Caspian are also growing in their energy output and discoveries in the last decade have proven them to hold important energy reserves. In 2000, one of the largest oil fields ever found in the world, the Kashagan oil field, was discovered in Kazakhstan. The country now accounts for more than 3\% of the world’s oil reserves (Russia 5\%) and produces 1.6\%.\textsuperscript{301} Also Kazakh and Turkmenian gas reserves together are estimated on being the 7th largest in the world (figure 4.1). Russia also controls the export of oil (80\%) and gas from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, since the most export pipelines from these countries cross Russian territory (figure 4.2).\textsuperscript{302} This thus further increases Russia’s share of the energy export.

However, as we have already seen, Russia’s function as a transit for the increasing Caspian energy supply has been challenged by Western states seeking to diversify their energy imports. The first phase of the energy transit corridor has already been implemented with the successful construction of the Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan pipeline, the South Caucasus Pipeline, and modernisation of Baku-Supsa oil pipeline.\textsuperscript{303} These pipelines initially relied on energy supplies from resource-rich Azerbaijan, however since 2006, Kazakhstan also made plans to transport some of its oil exports through the BTC. Already in June 2006, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan signed a framework containing the plans to create a Trans-Caspian oil transportation system that should send some of the Kazakh oil to and through the BTC.\textsuperscript{304} Shipping would be the main means of transporting the Tengiz oil field export to the Azerian side of the Caspian. For the Kashagan oil field, plans were made for an oil pipeline to connect it with the BTC, called

\textsuperscript{297} Peter Rutland, ‘Russia as an Energy Superpower’ New Political Economy 2008, Vol. 13, No. 2 p.203
\textsuperscript{298} Rutland, 2008; 203
\textsuperscript{299} Energy Information Administration, ‘Russia Energy Profile’ retrieved on 06-08-2009
\textsuperscript{300} Rutland, 2008; 203
\textsuperscript{301} Guliyev and Akhrarkhodjaeva, 2009; 3173
\textsuperscript{302} Ibid; 203
\textsuperscript{304} Guliyev and Akhrarkhodjaeva, 2009; 3174
the Kazakh-Caspian Transportation System. These plans all interfered with Russia’s dominant transit position, and it was therefore deemed unfavourable.

The eighteen months before August 2008, had also been characterized by an intense competition between three gas projects: pipelines to Russia (expanding Russia’s transit role of Central Asian gas), the Trans-Asia gas pipeline network to China and the US/EU sponsored Trans-Caspian pipeline. The Trans-Caspian pipeline should connect the Kazakh and Turkmenian gas to the SCP by a pipeline under the Caspian Sea. It is now unclear whether there is enough Caspian gas for all three proposed pipeline routes, and Russia is thus afraid of losing important terrain to the Western transit corridor.

Russia has clear interests in maintaining its dominant transit position and the projects discussed above are threatening that position. In order to circumvent these Eastern Caspian energy flows to be connected to the transit corridor, this alternative route has to lose some of its attractiveness. Georgia has the most dominant role in the energy transport corridor due to its geographical location and subsequent transportation possibilities. First, it contains three pipelines, BTC, Baku-Supsa and the SCP, transporting the Caspian oil and gas. Also, Georgia transports these resources through its railroads, connecting the Caspian Sea and Port of Baku to the Georgian ports on the Black Sea. Finally, Georgia contains four important Black Sea ports, Poti, Batumi, Supsa and Kulevi.

International oil companies involved in the development and transportation as well as the Caspian producers of the oil and gas being transported, demand a safe and stable transportation line and a good return on their investments. The August 2008 war can be seen as a ‘reality check’ for the functioning of the western transit corridor. The war and the subsequent instability have raised concerns over the security and reliability of the existing and future Caspian and South Caucasus projects using the corridor as a transportation route. It has fuelled doubts among Central Asian leaders, notably in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, as to whether to increase their participation in the Westbound transportation projects in the future.

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305 Yenikeyeff, 2008; 3
306 Ibid; 3
307 Guliyev and Akhrarkhodjaeva, 2009; 3172
308 Ibid; 3172 ; Yenikeyeff, 2008; 3
However, this Russian ambition has not had the desired effect. Subsequent developments show that the Georgia-Russia conflict held back Kazakhstan’s expansion plans but at the same time could not stop them all together. In October TengizChevroil signed an agreement with the BTC pipeline company to increase the input of Tengiz oil into the BTC pipeline. On November 14, 2008, the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) and the Kazakh oil company KazMunaiGaz signed an agreement on the implementation of the Trans-Caspian project. This means that the plans for further Caspian oil and gas transportation via the corridor are still seen as a viable option. It is on the other hand still questionable whether the major investors, dominantly Western oil companies, will also be willing to take this risk.

4.3 Russian destabilizing instruments

As shown above, Russia clearly had major interests in the destabilization of the Georgian state. As we have already seen in chapter one and two, over a long period, Russia has used multiple tools in an effort to reach this specific goal. In the five-day war these tools were further brought into practice. These recent tools evidently show particular Russian intentions and therefore strengthen the view on Russian interests in destabilizing Georgia.

4.3.1 Georgian population

The destabilization efforts during the war were threefold. First of all, the Georgian population was made into an instrument of destabilization. Russian air force not only targeted military installations but also bombed civilian buildings. In Gori, three five-story apartment buildings were hit directly in the centre, suggesting that the Russian aircraft specifically targeted these buildings in addition to the military base. Human Right Watch reported that many of the surrounding villages were also targeted, destroying civilian property with no military significance. The city of Gori was eventually occupied by the Russian troops, causing the majority of the population to flee the city. In September 2008, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated the total number of displaced

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309 Nargis Kessenova, ‘Kazakhstan and the South Caucasus Corridor in the Wake of the Georgia-Russia War’ EU-Central Asia Monitoring 2009 Policy Brief No.3 January p.3
310 Ibid; 3
312 Human Right Watch, ‘Up In Flames; Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia’ January 2009 p.93
313 Ibid; 93-102
people within Georgia proper on 127,000. Another 30,000 people were displaced within South Ossetia. Even a year after the war, Amnesty International stated that approximately 30,000 ethnic Georgians are still unable to return to their homes. Of these, 18,500 ethnic Georgians who fled South Ossetia are facing long-term displacement, due to the complete closing of the South Ossetia borders by Russia. The war thus had a major impact on the Georgian civilians. Involving the civilians in the war has caused this war to have a great impact on the population. The high IDP figures have disrupted the Georgian society at large and are a huge drain for the Georgian economy. As seen during the mass demonstrations, this has contributed to growing opposition, partly blaming Saakashvili and the government for the events.

4.3.2 Georgian economy

The second important destabilisation effort was through the targeting of Georgia’s economy. First of all its infrastructure has been damaged by the Russian bombings. Russian aerial attacks damaged the railway stations, rail tracks, and an important bridge on the major transit railway. This has caused delays in transportation, among others that of Caspian oil. Russian bombs also destroyed two major radar systems that provided the safety for landings, take-offs and overflights of not only military but also commercial (passenger and cargo) flights. The Transcaucasus Highway north of Tskhinvali was damaged only mildly. However, the East-West transportation artery (significantly important roads, railways, and oil and natural gas pipelines linking the Caspian to the Black Sea) of which the Transcaucasus Highway is part, passes within close range of the Russian military units deployed in South Ossetia. Poti seaport suffered only minor material damage, but it suffered substantial losses in revenue and, even more importantly, reputation, leading to a sharp incline of insurance costs. Some four dozen Russian bombs fell next to Georgia's main pipeline, causing no physical damage, but damaging Georgia’s reputation as a safe and stable transit route.

314 UNHCR, ‘Revised Figures Push Number of Georgia Displaced up to 192,000’ 12-09-2008
http://www.unhcr.org/48ca8d804.html
315 Ibid
316 Amnesty International, ‘Thousands Remain Displaced a Year After the Russia-Georgia Conflict’ 07-08-2009
317 Ibid
318 Tsereteli, 2009 14
319 Ibid; 14
320 Tuatail, 2008; 689
321 Tsereteli; 9
More than the physical damage it was the domestic as well as international loss of confidence in Georgia’s political stability that caused economic problems. The US-based Global Insight think tank, which consults Western companies on the risks of doing business in Georgia, increased Georgia’s security rating from 3.75 to 4 (1-5), and the risks of doing business from 3 to 3.5.\textsuperscript{322} The Foreign Direct Investments (FDI’s) clearly show this trust decrease. During the height of the economic growth, FDI averaged $2 billion dollars a year.\textsuperscript{323} Initial government estimates for 2008 placed foreign investment at over $2 billion, however in reality the country received just over $1 billion in FDI in that year.\textsuperscript{324} Moreover, due to the lack of trust, the devaluation of Georgia’s national currency causes high inflation. The dollarization of the Georgian economy has grown drastically, making the high dependence on import (80% consumer market import) severely damaging the economy.\textsuperscript{325} Another great loss of income due to Georgia’s dreadful international reputation is the loss of tourism income. In the first six months of 2009, only 600,000 tourists visited Georgia, compared to 1.3 million in the same period the year before.\textsuperscript{326} However, some of the above mentioned losses are defied by foreign aid. The World Bank alone has granted $2 billion and offered another $2.5 billion as loan.\textsuperscript{327}

4.3.3 The separatist regions

The third important destabilizing instrument, taking place in the immediate aftermath of the five-day war, was the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This has created long term chances on another conflict. The Georgian Minister of Reintegration, Temuri Yakobashvili, expressed Georgia’s view on the recognition plan, the night before the actual Russian approval by both houses of parliament, as follows.

\textit{"I don't think any Georgian government can accept losing those territories,"} \textit{"Absolutely, in the future, this is a recipe for future clashes. If it is accepted by the Russian government, sooner or later, the fighting will re-erupt."} \textsuperscript{328}

\textsuperscript{323} Mollo Corso, ‘Georgia’s Expansion Halts’ Caucasus Analytical Digest 21-05-2009 No.6 pp. 20
\textsuperscript{324} Ibid; 21
\textsuperscript{325} Vladimer Papava, ‘Post-War Georgia’s Economic Challenges’ Central Asia Caucasus Institute 26-11-2008
\textsuperscript{326} Donald Rayfield, ‘The Georgia-Russia War, A Year On’ OpenDemocracy 14-08-2009
\textsuperscript{327} Vladimer Papava, ‘Georgia’s Economy: Post-revolutionary Development and Post-war Difficulties’ Central Asian Survey, No. 28 Issue 2 p.207
\textsuperscript{328} Philip Pan and Jonathan Finer, ‘Russian Parliament Backs Regions in Georgia; Resolution Urges Recognition of Independence’ The Washington Post 26-08-2008
This type of expression is very much in Russia’s interest. Hereby Georgia will be considered unattractive for security or economic investments due to possible chances of another conflict. Recently, in the beginning of August 2009, Russia has again tried to emphasize this by accusing it of firing mortars and grenades into South Ossetia. Russia also stated that it would defend South Ossetia with "all available forces and means" as tensions mounted ahead of the anniversary of last year's war. However, the spokesman of the European Union monitoring mission in the region (on the Georgian side), Steve Bird, reported that "There was no indication that Georgians had fired across the South Ossetian boundary line, but there were also no indications that mortar fire landed somewhere close to the checkpoint on the Georgian side" as Georgia subsequently accused South Ossetia of. These heightened tensions again portray the possibility of another conflict in Georgia and thus expose security and economic investments as risky. Both international institutions like EU and NATO as well as economic investors, like pipeline constructors, are again being reminded to be weary of cooperating with Georgia.

4.4 Conclusion

During and after the war, Russia has clearly shown its interests in the destabilisation of Georgia. This destabilisation was deemed necessary for three dominant reasons. First of all it could contribute to the efforts of stopping the Western democracy spread, which was perceived as a threat to the Russian governing elite. Furthermore, with economic and political instability, Georgia would become less attractive as a potential member for both NATO and the EU. Georgia will have more difficulty to meet the conditionalities present at these institutions. This also accounts for the security partnership. The war with Russia had shown the Western NATO members the possible consequence of the inclusion of Georgia into their organisation. The ever present conflict over the two separatist regions had been a major argument against membership, and now proved to be a valid one. Furthermore, the political destabilisation as well as the loss of economic growth had made it ever more difficult to meet NATO’s and EU’s financial conditions. Finally the war has raised concerns over security and reliability of the existing Caspian and South Caucasus routes and other westbound Trans-Caspian oil and gas projects currently under consideration. Russia hopes to therefore keep its

329 Philip P. Pan, ‘Tensions Flare Up In Russia, Georgia; Moscow Says South Ossetia Was Attacked’ The Washington Post 02-08-2009
dominant transit role and exhibit its pipeline expansion plans. This transit role is of elementary interest to maintain its most dominant foreign policy tool: energy export.

Russia has used several instruments to pursue the policy of destabilisation, and not without success. Demonstrations in April and May have shown the discontentment of a relative large part of the Georgian population. Trust in the government has decreased substantially. Next to this, the economy has felt the consequences of the war, among others by the decreased FDI and high inflation figures. Russia has therefore reduced Georgia’s chances on membership of either NATO or EU and has made it less attractive as a transit route for the Caspian energy. This however is only temporarily. Georgia’s geostrategic position makes it too attractive for the Western countries to leave it as it is. Russia will either have to show its muscles again and thereby worsen its relations with the West, or it will have to let Georgia leave its sphere of influence.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

In order to get a thorough perspective on the five-day war and its specific Russian interests, first the historic relations between Russia and Georgia have been described. It has become clear that these relations have been difficult from the very outset of the Soviet Union’s liberalization under Gorbachev. In effect, the nationalism that arose in Georgia caused a quest for independence not only within the country as a whole, but also in the minority regions. Although Gorbachev actively opposed these Georgian independence efforts, Yeltsin was too occupied with his own power struggle and self rule aspirations within the Soviet Union. However, after the nationalist smoke cleared and the Soviet Union had disintegrated with relative ease, it slowly became obvious that the new Russian Federation had lost a major part of the former Soviet territory and strength.

With the redefinition of the Russian Federation within the international community, soon the desire arose to return to a great power status. This brought back the significance of the former Soviet republics, which Russia now wanted to keep in its sphere of influence. Already in the first stages of Georgian independence, Russia got the opportunity to interfere within the country by intervening in the conflict between Georgia and its secessionist regions. Between 1991 and 1993, Russia intervened in the conflict by stationing peacekeeping troops in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Ever since, this Russian meddling effectively kept the regions in the hands of secessionist power by freezing the conflict. Furthermore, in return of the peacekeeping efforts, Russia claimed several military bases on Georgian territory, thereby preserving military presence in Georgia. From the very first stages, Georgia thus experienced Russian ambitions to preserve control on its territory.

Georgia was nevertheless strongly opposed to a return to Russian domination and sought alternatives to counter these Russian ambitions. By the end of the Yeltsin reign, Georgia had tried to move itself away from Russia as far as possible. It had shown aspirations to join Western institutions, sought further US cooperation and had set up GUUAM to balance Russian influence. Energy alternatives were started in order to decrease dependence on Russian energy and additionally Georgia revealed itself as an important geo-strategical partner for the energy transit of Caspian energy to the West.
Russia on the other hand, felt increasingly threatened by the spread of Western institutions like EU and NATO towards Eastern Europe. The Western security threat was further emphasized with the Kosovo crisis, where Russia discovered it lacked the power to stop such a military action in its former backyard. These events further fuelled Russia’s willingness to maintain a sphere of influence in its ‘near abroad’. In the case of Georgia it used the separatist regions to keep some form of control over the country.

With the coming of Putin into office, Russian foreign policy shifted to a more forceful approach, affecting the already distorted relations. The economic crisis of 1998 had further alienated Russian popular opinion from the Western liberal ideology and made way for neo-Soviet sentiments. Putin contributed to this mentality by stating that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.” He wanted to restore the great power status and stressed the importance of controlling its ‘near abroad’. Russian economic power, which began to grow again mainly due to the growing energy prices, was introduced as the main weapon in this struggle.

In 2003, the Western supported Rose Revolution brought to power a Georgian president who directly countered Russia’s foreign policy aims and represented the new liberal democracy spread, branded: the colour revolutions. Apart from this revolutionary democratic threat on the Russian border, Saakashvili revealed a foreign policy that was directly opposing Russian foreign policy interests. He actively tried to dispose of two of Russia’s main leverage mechanisms in Georgia. Firstly, Saakashvili insisted on the closing of the remaining Russian military bases and secondly he tried to restore Georgia’s territorial integrity by establishing control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Saakashvili also further tightened relations with the West with the signing of the European Neighbourhood Policy and NATO’s phase of ‘intensified dialogue’. Finally, progression was made with the active energy transit projects, increasing the competition over the transport of Caspian oil and gas to the West.

These actions have led Russia to use its power in an effort to weaken and destabilize Georgia. It banned Georgian consumer goods and more than doubled the price of natural gas. Furthermore it intensified its ties with Abkhazia and South Ossetia by handing out Russian passports and resuming economic relations.
In 2008, these continuing tensions reached its pinnacle in the five-day war. The historic relations showed that this conflict was not at all new, but the result of two decades of clear opposing interests. The West had, despite Russian warnings, further interfered in Eastern Europe by recognizing Kosovo independence and discussing Ukrainian and Georgian NATO membership. In a reaction to this increasing Western interference and its particular Georgian response, Russia again intensified its relations and support for the two Georgian breakaway regions. This set the stage for mutual military provocations between Russia and Georgia. Though there is still a debate on who started on the night of August 7, the majority of the media, NGO’s and specialists assume it was Georgia who first attacked South Ossetia. Most likely, Georgia decided to try to reunify South Ossetia with Georgia like it had tried numerous times before.

However this conflict had erupted into a war dominantly due to the extreme confidence both states possessed during that time. Georgia felt strong with the US and NATO support. Russia on the other hand had also felt extremely secure about its international position. The unusual high energy prices had rapidly made Russia economically independent from the West and thus more able to pursue its self interest. Both sides were consequently extremely confident of their own capabilities.

The disproportional Russian reaction has been explained as an effort to destabilize Georgia in order to pursue particular Russian interests. These interests had already arisen after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the subsequent loss of territory and buffer zone. First and foremost Russia wanted to counter the fear of Western dominance. This was formulated already in Primakov’s foreign policy, aiming at great power balancing and dominated foreign policy ever since. The destabilization of Georgia could circumvent membership for NATO and EU so that Western institutions would not further penetrate Russia’s ‘near abroad’. Furthermore, Russia wanted to remain the dominant energy exporter, since its energy power serves as a powerful foreign policy tool.

The particular instruments used by Russia in the five-day war clarified Russian interests. The description of the five-day war specifically showed how Russia willingly targeted civilian and economic structures with the purpose of destabilizing the society. Mass displacement and the destruction of the economy indeed caused social unrest. Russia moreover risked internal conflict with its own secessionist regions with the independence recognition of Abkhazia and
South Ossetia in order to keep Georgia instable and unattractive. This destabilization, together with the strong message of Russian willingness to go to war, had to make Georgia less attractive for further security and economic investments. At the same time it could count as a warning for all players, Western institutions and CIS states, not to obstruct Russian interests.

The war can therefore not be regarded as a complete surprise, however it does account as a unique event in the region. Never before, since the demise of the Soviet Union, had a war erupted between one of the former Soviet republics and Russia. The significance of the events is that it reveals Russian willingness to military defend the remaining part of its geopolitical neighbourhood. This makes further security cooperation with these states extremely precarious for the Western institutions and the US. Secondly, with the independence recognition, Russia has damaged the principle of inviolability of the 1991 borders, further destabilizing the fragile geopolitical post-Soviet space. In this space multiple problematic regions exist with border conflicts. Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Transdniester (Moldova) and Chechnya (Russia) are the primary examples of breakaway regions within the former republics that could again erupt into conflicts with the end of the inviolability of the 1991 borders. Also the dominantly ethnic Russian Crimea (Ukraine), although relatively peaceful for over a decade, could perhaps become an area of contestation again. With these multiple contested borders within this post-Soviet space, the war could consequently mark the end of an era of relative stability in the region.
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Annex

Figure 2.1 Russia after disintegration

Figure 2.2 Disputed regions in Georgia

Source: BBC news
Figure 2.3 The North Caucasus

Source: Finrosforum.fi

Figure 2.4 The energy transit corridor

Source: Energy Information Administration
Figure 2.5 The Pankisi Gorge

Source: BBC news
Figure 3.1 The five-day war

Source: Wikimedia
Figure 4.1 Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan oil and gas fields

Source: Energy Information Administration
Figure 4.2 Major Russian oil and gas pipelines to Europe

Source: Energy Information Administration